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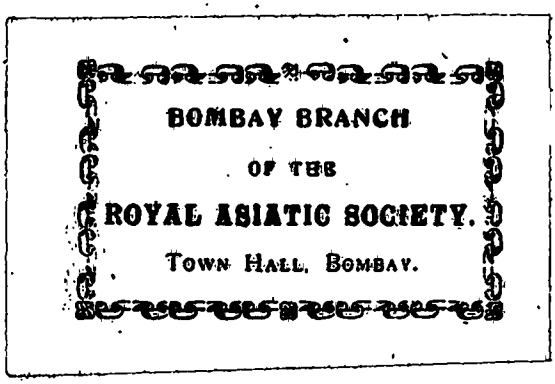

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STRIKES, COMBINATIONS, AND TRADES' UNIONS.

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WORKMEN AND WAGES

AT HOME AND ABROAD

OR THE EFFECTS OF

STRIKES, COMBINATIONS, AND TRADES' UNIONS

BY

J. WARD

AUTHOR OF 'THE WORLD IN ITS WORKSHOPS,' 'THE HISTORY OF FLAX,' 'THE HISTORY OF GOLD,' ETC.

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TO

THE RIGHT HON.

WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE, M.P.

THIS VOLUME IS HUMBLY DEDICATED

AS A MARK OF RESPECT

FOR HIS

JUST APPRECIATION OF THE LABOURING CLASSES

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

"FEW whose opinions are of any weight and importance will dispute the fact that, in all the leading and substantial elements of national prosperity, this country may justly claim precedency over any community, whether it be in the Old or in the New World. Yet, although we possess these rare advantages, we cannot shut our eyes to manifest symptoms, which clearly indicate that the people—the working-classes, we should perhaps say—are suffering under some acute internal disorder. To reconcile these apparently contradictory phenomena would be almost a hopeless task; but we may possibly trace the sources whence some of our difficulties proceed, and suggest a remedy to prevent their periodic recurrence. It may turn out that our advantages have contained the main source of the evils which assail us, or that those advantages have been neutralised by some accompanying evils not sufficiently appreciated.

The most remarkable circumstance in our social progress and national prosperity has been the rapid increase and ascendancy of manufacturing wealth. We have had the sudden growth of an opulent commercial and manufacturing class, and by the side of this a numerous, self-willed, and, in some respects, an intelligent body of working-men. Sudden alternations of prosperity and

depression, extremes of wealth and destitution, increase of intemperance and spread of education, the growth of independent opinion on every public question, and the conflicting claims of capital and industry, to say nothing of other anomalies peculiar to our existing social state, have also lent their aid to perplex the problem. The transition, moreover, from agricultural to manufacturing supremacy has not only created new interests, and new questions for discussion, but has vastly enlarged the circle of inquirers. Questions of government, law, and commerce, of industry and labour, are not now agitated and solved by jealous, limited, and exclusive classes—by the clergy, the educated, and the learned—but by an admixture of these with that powerful, heterogeneous, and multitudinous body, which forms at least three-fifths of the community, denominated the industrial orders. No monopoly of intellect is recognised by this class, which claims the right of free and full discussion. It is, therefore, to explain in some degree these altered conditions of society that we have ventured to pen the following observations; and we shall be well satisfied if we can thus prepare the way for more able workers in the field of industrial investigation.

The relation between capital and labour is fast becoming, not only in this country, but also on the Continent, in America, and in our Colonies, the most momentous question of the day. In former times the social condition of the working-classes rendered it impossible for them to raise a discussion on the subject in their own interest. The employers, who were for the most part lords and owners of the soil, had, in their social and political power, a guarantee that their views on the question would be enforced. The people of different countries were divided by war, and by natural difficulties of intercommunication. The latter

have been overcome by the steam-engine, the electric telegraph, and the cheap press; and with regard to the former, although the war-cloud occasionally darkens the horizon of our modern civilisation, the growth of commerce and the arts of peace are binding together all the nations of the earth, and all rulers and governments, at the least, profess their anxiety to change for ever the sword for the pruning-hook. In our own country wealth has accumulated to an extent and at a rate never before equalled; new classes of power and new aristocracies have sprung up among us. The result is that, since the reign of George III., England has passed through a great social revolution; and the increase of wealth and prosperity has given increased independence to all classes of the community. Nor must we leave out of account the spread of education among the working-classes, who, according to their training, may be swayed by sound practical intelligence, or by plausible and chimerical schemes.

In no country in Europe are the working-classes so free from enforced taxation as they are in Great Britain. The French peasant is saddled with a salt-tax, a *contribution personnelle et mobilière*, and a license-tax; if he live in a town, he has also to pay the vexatious and burdensome *octroi*. The German workman pays a poll-tax, a class-tax, a trade-tax—sometimes a malt-tax, and also an *octroi* in certain places. The English workman pays no direct taxes whatever; he is taxed only for his luxuries; and if he choose to dispense with these, none of which are absolutely essential to his physical wellbeing, he will be entirely exempt from either direct or indirect taxation. He has, likewise, much to be thankful for, inasmuch as there is probably no other country on the face of the globe where sober, industrious, young mechanics and labourers

can so soon raise themselves to ease, independence, and comparative comfort.

Let us do the English workman justice. He has invariably become more sober, persevering, and industrious, as his freedom has been extended, and as he has been relieved from the vexatious restraints to which he was formerly subject. But, though the Legislature no longer interferes to dictate the precise terms on which masters shall buy and workmen sell their labour, a set of laws were enacted, and were acted upon up to 1824, by which workmen were severely punished for combining together to raise their wages, or to oppose their reduction. These laws, which seemed in the highest degree partial, oppressive, and unjust, had their origin in a dark period. The plague which decimated England in 1348–49, having destroyed great numbers of the labouring poor, a greater competition took place for the services of those who survived, and who consequently obtained much higher wages. Parliament, however, instead of leaving this rise of wages to be reduced by the increase of population which it must call into existence, passed (in 1350) the Act of 23rd Edward III., for regulating wages at the rates which prevailed before the pestilence. But as this occasioned a great many disputes, an Act was passed, fixing the amount of wages to be given, for example, to reapers, mowers, haymakers, thrashers, &c., and also to the several classes of artisans.* Several Acts were subsequently passed, to enforce and strengthen these statutes; and some notion may be formed of the spirit which prevailed amongst our early lawmakers, when we state that it was made felony, by an Act passed in 1425 (3rd of Henry VI. cap. 1), for masons to combine together to raise their wages above the rate men-

* Commonly called artificers: *vide* Sir F. M. Eden's *State of the Poor.*

tioned in the Act. These oppressive and unjust laws were kept on the Statute Book until 1825, when Mr. Huskisson, who urgently enforced their repeal, insisted that—

> Every man is entitled to carry that talent which nature has given him, and those acquirements which his diligence has attained, to any market in which he is likely to obtain the highest remuneration, unless it can be shown that there is some paramount and overwhelming necessity against it. The laws against combinations have tended to multiply combinations, and have greatly aggravated the evil they were intended to remove. From the moment those laws were made, the workmen saw the injury which they inflicted upon them, and immediately began to consider by what means they could be best evaded. It was no slight objection to those laws that they created between the employer and the employed relations diametrically opposite to those which ought to exist; for they created jealousy, illwill, and discontent, instead of that feeling of goodwill that was calculated to make each party stand by the other in any period of mutual distress.

The 5th of George IV. cap. 9, which was substituted for the Combination Laws, afforded not only protection to masters, but also to such working-men as declined entering into associations. A summary jurisdiction was established, with power to convict for offences against the Act, on the oath of one credible witness, and to inflict an arbitrary punishment, to the extent of six months' imprisonment with hard labour. Some protection to the master was undoubtedly necessary, but it must be admitted that the vague manner in which the Act was worded left open a wide door for oppression, and that the removal of the constitutional protection of a jury was an infringement upon the rights of the workmen.

The question has been frequently asked—Have combinations raised wages? Many are of opinion that combinations

have had the effect of depressing wages; and the weight of evidence preponderates in favour of those who entertain the latter view. Many of the Northern workmen confessed that they gained nothing by entering into a combination, the support of which was a never-ceasing drain upon their pockets. One union expended upwards of 4,000*l.* in a fruitless attempt to bring a master under their control, the result of which was to cause fresh workmen to enter the trade, and thus, by competition, to lower the rate of wages. Even when the workmen have raised the rate of wages, they have mostly been injured by their success. High wages, as a rule, induce more labourers to enter the trade in which they are given than can be supplied with work; and the unemployed must be supported by those who get work, else the competition of their numbers will beat down the advance that has been obtained. In either case the advance (frequently more than the advance) of wages is completely lost by the expense of the various burdens which a combination entails.

Until within the last twenty-five or thirty years, combinations among working-men had no other ostensible object than that which was the real one—the establishment or maintenance of a fixed rate of wages in a particular employment. Now, the leaders often assume a higher tone, and not only declaim against capitalists generally, but propose the division of profits amongst that class of producers which at present furnish labour and receive weekly wages. Projects of this kind savour too much of what our neighbours on the other side of the Channel designate *Communism*, and, if applied to our industrial system, will bring about a complete social revolution. The intelligence of the working-classes is here slightly at fault; and it would be well, not only for themselves, but for the community at large, if they would fairly and deliberately reason out the

proposition, and come to something like a logical conclusion upon it.

The present state of the law makes it no crime for a workman to strike whenever he pleases, unless he has bound himself by a specific contract with his employer. His labour being exclusively his own free property, he may dispose of it to whom, or on what terms, he chooses. He may demand any amount of wages, and refuse to work unless he obtains it. Indeed, he may go so far as to combine and concert with his fellow-workmen to promote a simultaneous and general strike, in order to make their united demands more effectual. But here his power over his own labour, and his legitimate influence over that of others, terminate. If he attempt to use coercion, or terror, or threats over another workman, to compel him to join in the strike, he is then guilty of a crime, and is an offender against the law. He is depriving the man with whom he so interferes of the power of disposing of his own particular labour, in the manner, and on the terms, which he himself is willing to accept for it, and practically denying to another the right he is claiming and exercising for himself.

There can be little doubt that labour is entitled to the same protection, as a property, with capital. Adam Smith has justly remarked that—'The property which every man has in his own labour, as it is the original foundation of all other property, so it is the most sacred and inviolable. The patrimony of a poor man lies in the strength and dexterity of his hands; and to hinder him from employing that strength and dexterity in what manner he thinks proper, without injury to his neighbours, is a plain violation of this most sacred property.' As an exchanger of labour for capital, the labourer ought, therefore, to be assured that the exchange, in every respect,

shall be as free as the exchange of any other commodity. With this freedom the labourer has the full and absolute possession of his property, and, in that respect, he is upon a legal equality with the capitalist, his employer.

It would be well for the great body of the working-classes if they understood, or would even take the trouble to understand, the economic laws by which they are governed, and which are as fixed and enduring as the great laws of the universe. Here, for example, is a law, the knowledge of which would save the working-man a world of trouble—namely, that every commodity is cheap where there is a large supply of it in the market in proportion to the demand. So it is with labour. When the market is overstocked, there is a superabundant supply. If there were a greater demand for labour than there were labourers to answer that demand, the employers would have but one alternative; but while more men are asking for employment than can find it, there will be a competition for employment, and the employer will naturally take the workman who, other circumstances being equal, will serve him on the lowest terms. While, then, the market is overstocked with labourers, labour, in the very nature of things, must be cheap. The population, under these circumstances, has simply outstripped the demand for labour, and the progressive accumulation of active capital. The workman has no right to insist on his master paying him higher wages, if the master can find a man who can supply his place for lower wages; nor has a workman the right to say to his fellow-workman, that he shall not work for such wages as he likes himself, but at such wages as the other likes. If workmen have a right to demand higher wages, the master has an equal right to refuse them; and then it becomes a question, whether the men are justified, by

reason and equity, in demanding, or the masters in denying, higher wages. That is the real question of right.

One of the pet fallacies of the working-men is the following: — 'What,' jauntily exclaims one of them, 'would be the use of the masters' capital without our labour? Is it not this that makes capital productive? Is it not labour that gives real value to the soil, and to whatever it produces? It is our skill and industry which makes them worth anything. The whole value is created by us, and should chiefly, if not entirely, belong to us. But is it so? Quite the reverse. The labour is ours—the profits are monopolised by our masters. They live in luxury, and we have scarcely meat to eat.' There are always two sides to a picture; let us, for a moment, glance at the opposite one. Does the workman ever ask himself, what would be the use of his will and his ability to labour without his employer's capital? Where would he get the money to buy the materials? Who would maintain him while he was working them up? Would he be sure of finding a ready purchaser when he had finished the article? If he could not get ready money for it, and was obliged to give credit, would there be no risk in his having bad debts? These are difficulties, inconveniences, and risks which the master takes upon himself. He buys the material on which the workman is to work; he advances the wages with which the workman is fed and clothed from week to week; he makes this advance for months, perhaps for years, before he touches a shilling in return for the workman's wages, and takes upon himself all bad debts, so that the workman can lose nothing. If, then, the master depends upon the workman's labour, it is equally clear that the workman depends upon the master's capital; and to compel the master to raise wages, beyond what he

can afford, is injustice and tyranny, and must, in the end, be the ruin of both master and man.

'No trades-union,' says a very competent authority,* 'ever encouraged invention. Hundreds of inventions are not used because trades-unions are strong enough to prevent them. This is shown in the case of brickmaking-machines, and thus millions of bad bricks are annually made, and thus society is injured. Unfortunately, the working-man continues, in almost every trade, in policy or feeling at least, the unionist. One of the most mischievous fallacies of the day is the idea that labourers have the power to form successful and useful combinations, and that masters will voluntarily give all that had hitherto been tried by force to obtain from them; and between employers and employed the relations will be those of voluntary partnerships. There is a strong distinction between associations for competitive trade purposes, or for national ones, and trades-unions, which are so many unsound monopolies. Associations or voluntary unions are entered into from class-feeling, from fear, and for restriction. No trades-union, no protective monopoly, has ever really benefited a people. It may have benefited, temporarily, a small class, but it injures the mass. The masters—far from wishing to shelter their own class—advise competition. Education and industry are the best securities for individual and national progress.' The conclusions Mr. Potter arrives at are—that trades-unions are founded for an unsound purpose; that, consequently, their moral effects are bad; that society can be best aided by free and open competition, and that education and forethought alone can secure to everyone his just reward.

There is a strong leaven of Communism in trades-

* Mr. Edmund Potter, F.R.S.—Paper contributed to the Social Science Meeting at Glasgow.

unions, each, in its peculiar way, doing its best to merge the individual in the mass. Trades-unions say to the working-man, 'Don't work so fast, nor do so much during the day; you are injuring your fellow-workman, who is slower than you; and if you produce too much, there will be less work for all to do.' This is sufficient to make a man who *can* work only half a man; but it *cannot* make half a man, who never could work, a man, if the expression may be allowed. The Communists do not mince matters, but tell men to go into the great workshop and labour in common, for by that means all will be benefited. We can easily understand this creed, and appreciate its simplicity.

Let us pursue this subject a little further. One man in the workshop has great physical strength, another very little; that one is strong but awkward, another is weak but clever; that one will do but little work, another much. Are these to work according to their respective faculties, and earn as much wages as they possibly can; or are they to suit their respective powers to some fixed standard, by which the strong and energetic man shall be kept down to the same level with the weak and comparatively indolent man? The question answers itself. But let us suppose a mechanic addressed by his master in this way: 'This bit of machinery, which took you ten days to make, and for which I paid you five shillings a day, thus bringing you in fifty shillings, I give you to make as piecework. You will do it in whatever time you please—I will pay you fifty shillings all the same.' Should his master tell him that he must make it in six, seven, or eight days, in order to earn eight, seven, or six shillings—then he will work hard, night and day if necessary, and will endeavour to earn more either for himself or for his children. Had it been otherwise, piecework would not have been adopted. Man, after all, is a selfish creature, and, no doubt, has

been created so for a wise purpose. In order, therefore, to excite him to labour, you must set before him the bait of comfort and wellbeing—in other words, good wages, which produce good living for himself and his children, after labouring well and labouring earnestly, which to him is a real pleasure. When man, moreover, devotes himself to special labour, that labour ought to be remunerated conformably to the object in view, and, in order to incite him to labour as much as possible, he should have as much as he may have produced—not more, nor less. But you must bring the end home to him, and for that purpose lead him to expect, not the *wellbeing of all, nor even that of a few*, but his own and that of his children. Besides the justice of such action, he will be excited to the highest degree possible; for he that labours much will have much, and he that labours little will have but little.

Capital and labour, indeed, must go hand-in-hand to produce abundance, and fairly to distribute that abundance in the form of profit and wages, justly balanced by the steady operation of demand and supply in a free and unrestricted market. When this happy union shall take place, there will be no necessity for Royal Commissions to investigate the relations between employer and employed; and then we hope to hear no more of the murderous outrages which have disgraced Sheffield, Manchester, and other places. Acts of violence and illegal pressure will never enable the artisan to maintain or to augment his weekly wages; but by fair and open competition in the labour-market, by prudence, and by industry, he may fairly hope to secure both.

Dec. 10, 1867.

WORKMEN AND WAGES.

CHAPTER I.

COMBINATIONS.

When the Working Classes became a distinct body in the social state—when they had partially emancipated themselves from the authority of the guilds and corporations which were gradually dying out—there naturally sprung up what may be termed combinations amongst particular trades, whose object was to maintain the rate of wages, and to uphold the presumed interest of the men against that of their masters. The combination of the operatives of a particular trade for the purpose of regulating wages was, therefore, only formed when the declining power of corporations was insufficient to uphold the monopolies which had been committed to their charge.

We find the earliest formal notice of the artisans and workmen, in public Acts, in the reign of Edward I. From the time of that prince down to a very recent period it was the practice of Parliament to interfere respecting the stipulations in the contract of wages between masters and servants; and as the deliberations of that body were, in the majority of cases, guided by the suggestions and advice of the masters, it was scarcely to be expected that both parties would receive even-handed justice in the measures of the Legislature. But the gradual advance of civilisation, and the spread of sounder and more enlarged views of public economy, having impressed all classes

with a conviction of the general impolicy of such interference, it gradually fell into desuetude; and the experience of upwards of five hundred years has shown that, while every attempt to set a *maximum* on the price of labour is oppressive and injurious to the workmen, it is of no real advantage to their employers; for it has been found that the workman has uniformly become more persevering and more industrious, according as his freedom has been extended, and as he has been relieved from the vexatious and annoying restraints to which at one time he was subjected.

Though the Legislature, however, no longer interfered to dictate the precise terms on which masters should buy, and workmen should sell, their labour, it preserved a body of laws, up to 1824, by which workmen were liable to severe punishment for *combining together* to raise their wages, or to oppose the reduction of their wages. Combinations, however, have a very early origin; they may be traced to a period coeval with the establishment of Christianity, and probably to a time antecedent to that epoch. Blackstone alludes to the existence of combinations in the later days of the Roman Empire; and the associations forbidden by the Emperor Zeno, mentioned by Gibbon,* may be cited as a proof that wherever labour is left to supply and demand, a supplementary stock of workmen will speedily spring into existence, to satisfy the requirements of that great economic law.

The inimical policy, however, of Edward III. towards trades-guilds would have sooner created in England a surplus of free labour, and consequently have produced combinations, but for the incident of the wars of the Houses of York and Lancaster, which paralysed, for a time, industrial pursuits in this country. The motives which induced Edward, at an early period of his reign, to annul the franchise of guilds,† 'as prejudicial to the king, prelates, and great men, and oppressive to the commons,' had, in all probability, no better source than the superior amount of 'fee ferme,' and subsidies offered by the more

* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. † 1 Stat. 9 Edw. III.

skilful Flemish traders who had recently established themselves in this country. The licence accorded, in 1337, 'to 'all persons to make cloths,' and many other provisions in the Act of 1350 (the Statute of Labourers), and also in that of 1363, clearly but indirectly indicate the decline of compulsory labour. The disputes of rival incorporations contributed largely to this desired result, not only by increasing the demand for lucrative employment, but by affording, in various parts of the kingdom, more than one purchaser of labour. The workmen were, however, restrained by numerous and conflicting laws, which are only intelligible when viewed in connection with the necessities of the monarch and those of the privileged classes.

The terrible plague which decimated England, in 1348 and 1349, thinned the ranks of the labouring poor, and, as a consequence, caused a competition for the services of those who survived. Higher wages were demanded and obtained, and the economic law of demand and supply would have come into full operation, had not Parliament arbitrarily interfered, and passed an Act which will ever stand as a monument of the wisdom of that body. Instead of leaving the temporary rise of wages (to which the poor had an unquestionable right) to be reversed by the increase of population it must infallibly have occasioned, Parliament passed, in 1350, the well-known Act for the regulation of wages. By this statute, labourers were obliged to serve for such wages as were common in the districts in which they resided previous to the plague. But, as this gave rise to a great deal of cavilling, a statute was passed two years afterwards, fixing the amount of the wages to be given to reapers, mowers, haymakers, thrashers, &c., and also to the more common and useful class of artisans.*

The remuneration to be paid the labourer was therefore fixed by law,† and apprenticeship formed the only title by which a man could follow a particular trade; the calling being embraced in early youth, and once chosen, could never be altered,‡ for those employed in husbandry even

* Sir F. Eden's 'State of the Poor,' vol. i.
† 23 & 25 Edw. III. ‡ 37 Edw. III.

until twelve years of age, were not afterwards permitted to leave their employment.* The clothing of the mechanic and rustic were peculiar objects of legislation, and by the 37th of Edward III., the former was allowed to give two pounds for his piece of cloth, whilst the latter was condemned to wear 'blanket and russet lawn.' No servant was allowed to pass from one hundred to another, † and the sole monopoly of labour was in some districts confined to guilds.‡ The agricultural labourer continued restless and dissatisfied, and seemed anxious to participate in the advantages of the manufacturing classes, who, on their part, were indisposed to tolerate any such participation. The corporations, however, began to exhibit unmistakable signs of decline; and instead of maintaining the weight and authority which Chaucer's expression would seem to imply, as 'solempne and grete fraternities,' which they were in his time, they had become what Bacon denounced as 'fraternities in evil,' to which they had degenerated by the contracted and selfish policy with which they opposed every attempt to extend the privileges which they exclusively enjoyed. These corporations sturdily opposed, for example, the admission of apprentices, against which four distinct laws, in three distinct reigns, were directed.§

Nor were the mechanics, or artificers (as they were commonly termed), who were allowed to participate, to a certain extent, in the privileges of the corporations, much more contented than those who were entirely excluded from them. By an Act, passed in 1465, the truck system was made illegal; and in 1482 the fullers and thickeners of hats, bonnets, and caps, were indulged with the laying aside, for two years, of a piece of machinery which abbreviated their work. The events too in London, on evil May-day, 1518, show that the English artisans were keenly alive to everything that affected their interests, and prepare us for the first mention of a *Combination of Workmen* resembling those which are familiar to us in our

* 12 Rich. II. † 25 Hen. VIII. c. 18. ‡ 12 Rich. II.
§ 15 Hen. VI. c. 6; 19 Hen. VII. c. 7; 22 Hen. VIII. c. 4; and 28 Hen. VIII. c. 5.

own days. Two statutes of Edward VI.* throw a curious light upon this subject. These statutes premise 'that artificers, handicraftsmen, and labourers, have made confederacies and promises, and have sworn mutual oaths, not only that they should not meddle with one another's work, and perform and finish that another hath begun, but also to constitute and appoint how much work they shall do in a day, and what hours and times they shall work, contrary to the laws and statutes of this realm, and to the great hurt and impoverishment of His Majesty's subjects.' The penalties were exceedingly severe: for a third offence a fine of forty pounds, or sitting in the pillory, loss of an ear, and to be taken afterwards as a man 'infamous,' and not to be credited. This part of the Act was subsequently repealed,† but there was no provision made to prevent a recurrence of the evil which did not previously exist in the 12th of Richard II. There is, however, a curious enactment in the last section of the 2nd and 3rd statutes of Edward VI., c. 15, which, taken in connection with the foregoing part, leads to the supposition that combinations had occurred amongst those who were employed in architecture. Freemasons, rough masons, carpenters, bricklayers, &c., are there privileged to work in the said crafts, in any city, borough, or town corporate, with anyone who will retain them; but this boon was withdrawn the following year, and only the penal part of the statute left, which, with all other existing laws affecting labour, was repealed by the 5th of Elizabeth. This Act, commonly known as the Statute of Apprentices, forms a remarkable epoch in the history of British industry. There is, perhaps, less of novelty in the law than its author‡ supposed; but it substituted a practical and intelligible regulation of labour for that which, as the preamble states, could not, 'without the great grief and burden of the poor labourer and hired man, be put in good and due execution.' The provisions of this statute were in force for two centuries and a half, during which the commercial greatness of England was achieved, with

* 2d & 3d, c. 15. † By 5 Eliz. c. 4. ‡ Sir William Cecil.

less suffering and discontent, on the part of the labouring classes, than any other age or state of society had known.

From the commencement of this Act, it may be inferred that the Statute of Labourers, passed in 1350, and not the law of Richard II., passed in 1390, whereby justices of the peace were directed every year to assess wages, was in force. 'The wages and allowances limited and rated in many of the said statutes are in divers places too small, and not answerable to this time, respecting the advancement and prices of all things belonging to the said servants and labourers.' The Act directs that no person shall be hired for less than a year, that all men shall be compellable to work either at trade or husbandry, excepting gentlemen born, &c.; the putting away a servant, and his testimonial, are regulated; wages are to be assessed by justices, and a fine is to be levied on those who do not attend the justice meetings for the purpose; the giving or receiving more than the amount assessed is forbidden; the 31st section states that 'it shall not be lawful for any person to exercise any art, mystery, or manual occupation *now used* in England and Wales, unless he shall have been seven years apprentice to the same.' Great pains are taken to prevent the poor rustic from turning mechanic. Merchants may receive no apprentices but such whose parents expend 40*s.* a year; and, again, woollen weavers in Cumberland, Westmoreland, Lancashire, and Wales can take no apprentices, excepting the sons of freeholders of 3*l.* per annum. This Act anticipates some of the objects at which trades-unions aimed; but it was not until a very different order of things prevailed in England, when such an Act could no longer be rigorously administered, that these associations reappeared.

The Chartered Societies, which were in some degree placed beyond the reach of the 5th of Elizabeth, occasionally interrupted the tranquillity which was essential to productive industry. The wants of the workman occupied the attention of these communities precisely in the degree in which they were identified with their own. The pro-

ceedings in the Shrewsbury case * are illustrative of the wretched and dishonest policy of these monopolies as affecting labour, and furnish a lesson not inapplicable to the supporters of modern combinations. The mechanics connected with the mystery of drapers, incorporated in the town of Shrewsbury, complained that artificers neither belonging to their company, nor brought up to their trade—

Have of late, with great disorder, upon a mere covetous desire and mind, intromitted with and occupied the same trade, having no knowledge, skill, or experience of the same, and do buy commonly and daily such Welch cloth and flannels as is defective, and not truly made, to the impeachment and hinderance of six hundred people of the art or science of sheermen, or frizers, within the said town, whereby as well they as their poor wives and families are wholly maintained.

The Legislature of that day listened to the representations made by the good frizers of Shrewsbury, and, in unison with the wisdom which then generally prevailed in such matters, expelled the rival artisans from the town. A change, however, came over the mind of the Legislature, and six years had scarcely elapsed ere the Act was repealed, the repeal being accompanied with the following peculiar avowal:—

And where sithence the making the said Act experience hath plainly taught in the said town, that the said Act hath not only not brought the good effect that was hoped and surmised, but also hath been, and is now likely to be, the very greatest cause of the impoverishing and undoing of the poor artificers, and others at whose suit the said Act was procured, for that there be now sithence the passing of the said Act much fewer persons to set them to work than before.

The influence of corporations upon labour, although Charles II. granted several franchises, gradually declined, and the best workmen and the most enterprising masters removed themselves from places which were under the influence of corporate control. The Corporation and Test

* 8 Eliz. c. 7 and 14 Eliz. c. 12.

Acts, the Five Mile Act, and other statutes levelled by the Stuarts against Dissenters, had however some effect upon this movement, and societies were gradually formed which left the ancient cities and boroughs far in the rear. Birmingham, Manchester, and other places of kindred note, began their career of prosperity, and laid the basis of a commercial grandeur, of which the world affords no equal. The history of guilds, as may be imagined, has from this period little to do with the great subject of labour; and, with some trifling exceptions, after the beginning of the reign of William and Mary, the severance is total and complete. Yet Parliament did not entirely relinquish its control over labour, and the disputes between the employers and the employed. In the time of George I. a law* was passed to prevent combinations of wool-combers, and by the 22nd of Geo. II. c. 27, this Act was extended to every important branch of manufacture, and remained unrepealed until 1824. In spite, however, of the Act of George I., and of subsequent legislation of a similar spirit, combinations multiplied, and those who combined had union and secrecy forced upon them by the illegality of combinations, which no longer exists. The statutes during the last century on this subject are numerous, and are recited in the Acts of 1824 and 1825. Linen and silk weavers, tailors, hat-manufacturers, and paper-makers, &c., were all forbidden to combine by particular laws, and yet, mainly through inefficient legislation, these associations went on increasing.

There is something amusing, if not instructive, in the fact that, in regulating the rate of wages for silk-weavers, the authorities were obliged to go back to the time of Richard II. for precedents. This was the case, however, with regard to the 13th of Geo. III. c. 68, the justices assessing the rate of wages for silk-weavers after the precedents of Richard II. and Queen Elizabeth. And even as late as 1799 there is a curious Act† relating to colliers in Scotland, in which the provisions of the 5th of Elizabeth, and of two Scotch Acts (passed in 1617 and 1661), that justices shall

* 12 Geo. I. c. 34. † 39 Geo. III. c. 56.

appoint the ordinary hire and wages of labourers, are confirmed. This mode of settling the remuneration of the mechanic had been long disused before the 53rd of Geo. III. c. 40, which declares that the powers of justices 'in rating wages, or settling or fixing prices of work to be done or performed, shall be void;' and, lest such right shall be conveyed in the permission to justices to settle disputes between masters and workmen, the 5th of Geo. IV. c. 96 declares—'Nothing in this Act contained shall authorise any justice or justices to establish a rate of wages, or price of labour or workmanship, at which a workman shall in future be paid.'

It was evident, at the close of the eighteenth century, that the Act of Elizabeth operated upon a state of society very different from that for which it had been framed. The regulation of labour was governed by no fixed principles, but for every apparent deficiency a specific remedy was applied. In 1777 the dyers near the metropolis were, for instance, allowed to employ journeymen who had not served an apprenticeship; and in 1795 the wool-combers, because machinery had invaded their occupation, were privileged to exercise any trade throughout the kingdom—that being the relief awarded to bricklayers by Edward VI. Machinery, however, began to interfere, not only with the power, but also with the dexterity which protected the highly-paid artisan; and the labour of the working-man, although required on a larger scale, as the increasing population demonstrated, bore a more equal value, the qualities wanted being easily obtained, and requiring no long apprenticeship to acquire. In proportion as skill and labour became of less value, the upper class of workmen, besides redoubling their exertions, and bringing industry to its present unrivalled efficiency, were led to seek protection in combinations; and it remained to be seen whether the distinctions of journeymen and apprentices could successfully be upheld when the necessity of 'craft and science' had ceased, and when there was little or nothing to learn.

The experience of the last half of the eighteenth century

did not, however, prevent the Government, in 1799, from re-enacting the Combination Laws. The cotton-trade, then rapidly increasing, and of an origin too modern to be obnoxious to the 5th of Elizabeth, was supposed to stand greatly in need of this kind of regulation. It is somewhat remarkable that the cotton manufacture was never without unions among its artisans; although its almost uninterrupted prosperity might have induced a suspicion, that their effects were not so mischievous as had been represented by well-informed but interested people. The 39th and 40th of Geo. III. c. 106, which repealed a statute of the former year, had, however, for its primary object the prevention of combinations. This Act recites that—

> Contracts entered into for obtaining an advance of wages, for altering the usual time for working, or for decreasing the quantity of work (exceping such contract be made between a master and his journeymen), or preventing any person employing whomsoever they may think proper in their trade, or for controlling the conduct, or any way affecting any person or persons carrying on any manufacture or business, in the conduct or management thereof, shall be declared illegal, null, and void.

Workmen guilty of such offences might be committed to gaol for three months, or to the House of Correction for two months, on conviction before two magistrates; as also—

> Workmen combining to prevent any one from hiring himself, or prevailing upon him to quit his employment, or who shall hinder any master from employing any person, or without reasonable cause shall refuse to work with any other workman, and also all persons who shall attend meetings for the purpose of making such illegal contracts, or who shall endeavour to induce any journeyman to attend such meeting, or who shall collect money for such purposes.

Persons contributing are to be liable to a penalty of 10*l.*, and for collecting 5*l.* In acts of this description there is commonly some boon granted to the workman, in order to qualify the restrictions which are imposed upon him. Thus, in Edward VI.'s time, the price of food was equitably adjusted in the same instrument which forbade confede-

racies to enhance wages; and this last provision, under George II., was accompanied by a power given to justices to assess the labourer's remuneration. The 39th and 40th of Geo. III. c. 106, also contained enactments intended for the relief of the labourer—one by which combinations of masters are forbidden, and two relating to arbitrations in disputes between employers and employed. The first, however, was false in its principle, and useless in its application; and the last had no relation to the rate of wages, the great object of combinations, and therefore might as well have been bound up in a turnpike trust bill. The Act of 1800, together with one passed in the year following (40 Geo. III. c. 90), relating to arbitration, may be taken as the last great attempt to regulate labour by statute; but of its complete failure an avowal soon occurred, in the shape of a Resolution of the House of Commons, of March 28, 1804, declaring 'that the Act of the 39th and 40th year of his present Majesty has not produced the good effects expected.' The change, however, in the mode of settling disputes made in 1804, and the continuance of the Combination Laws for twenty years afterwards, sufficiently proves that no distrust was created of the power of legislation when judiciously applied to the guidance of labour.

The calico-printers, who had long formed unions, complained of their hardships to Parliament in 1804 and 1805, and a Committee was appointed to make enquiries into the nature of their complaints: it separated, however, without making any Report, but the evidence taken was laid before the House of Commons, and in 1807 Mr. Sheridan brought in a Bill for the relief of the calico-printers, proposing, amongst other things, to lessen the number of apprentices. The unions at that time were sufficiently numerous and powerful to derange materially the plans of the manufacturer; and Sir Robert Peel (*père*) remarked, in the debate of April 28, 1807, 'that there were many men of property who seriously thought of moving themselves and their capital to some other country, where their property would be better protected'—an

intimation which, though periodically made, was never carried into effect.

The mischief arising from the Combination Laws, however, was not so much their tendency to bring law into contempt, as the effect they had in corrupting and undermining the basis upon which all social rule rests. The just limits of legal and of moral duty are not always defined in the minds of the citizens of a well-governed state, and this was obviously the case in regard to offences through the Combination Laws at the commencement of the present century. From 1800 to 1824, the artisan who entered into a combination with the view of obtaining higher wages was regarded by the capitalist as little better than a felon. In 1818 bail to the amount of 200*l.*, and two sureties of 100*l.* each, were required for the appearance of a common workman to answer a charge of combining at the next sessions.* A general feeling, however, of the injustice and impolicy of the Combination Laws gradually grew into strength and force; and a disinclination sprung up, both on the part of masters and of justices of the peace, to put them in force, unless in seasons of disturbance, when they were administered for other objects than those which caused their enactment.

In the year 1824, Parliament repealed all the statutes, from the time of Edward III. to that of George III., which were prohibitory of combinations of workmen. The manner, however, in which enactments of this kind were framed exhibits the animus which prompted them, and the cold and almost callous relations which prevailed at that period between masters and men. The statute which stood last upon the book fully corroborates the truth of these remarks. This statute,† after declaring all combinations to obtain an advance of wages to be unlawful, went on to enact, that 'any workman who entered into a combination, either verbal or in writing, to obtain an advance of wages, to lessen the hours or time of working, to decrease the quantity of work, to *persuade*, intimidate,

* Report of Artisans' Committee (1824), p. 405.
† 39 & 40 Geo. III. c. 106.

or (by money or otherwise) endeavour to prevail on any other workmen not to accept employment; or who should, for the purpose of obtaining an advance of wages, endeavour to intimidate or prevail upon any person to leave his employment, or to prevent any person employing him; or who, being hired, should, without any just or reasonable cause, refuse to work with any other workman: such workman should, on the oath or oaths of *one* or more creditable witnesses, before any two justices of the peace, within three calendar months after the offence has been committed, be committed to, and confined in, the common gaol within their jurisdiction, for any time not exceeding three calendar months, or, at the discretion of such justices, should be committed to some house of correction, within the same jurisdiction, there to remain and be kept at hard labour for any time not exceeding two calendar months.'

The extreme severity of this enactment must strike even the most earnest advocate of repressive legislation, for justices of the peace belonged to the order of masters, and, however respectable individually, generally possessed a full share of the feelings and prejudices of that class. To invest, therefore, two of these justices with the power of imprisoning workmen for three months, without the intervention of a jury, was certainly entrusting them with an authority very liable to be abused, and which, if it ought to be exercised at all, should be placed in the hands of persons less likely to act under a bias. True, the workmen could appeal to the Quarter Sessions; but that was only an appeal from one set of justices to another, and therefore could be of little benefit to the working-man.

The Resolutions which closed the labours of the Committee on the Combination Laws, formed the basis of the subsequent legislation, and embraced the same view respecting the union of masters as had been entertained in 1800. The third, fifth, and sixth Resolutions treat of two descriptions of combinations—those of capitalists, and those of labourers—as equivalent powers. There is, however, a fallacy in this opinion which affects the whole question of Combinations. 'The masters,' says Adam

Smith, 'are always and everywhere in a sort of tacit, but constant and uniform, combination not to raise the wages above their actual rate;' and in another place the same author remarks: 'Masters, too, sometimes enter into particular combinations to sink the wages of labour below this rate. These are always conducted with the utmost silence and secrecy till the moment of execution.' These remarks of Adam Smith are, however, to be taken *quantum ad valeat.*

The only evidence given before the Committee of 1824, of an instance of a perfect combination of masters, was that of the ten London type-founders; and (strange as it may seem from what is stated before that Committee), it may be fairly inferred that in the small trades, where there is the nearest approach to a successful union of employers, the wages of the employed are often the highest and the most effectually secured. As for the reduction of wages being the work of combined masters, there is, perhaps, no given subject upon which, in the leading trades, it is more difficult to produce a unity of purpose. When the master-spinners of Manchester—closely besieged by their workmen, their mills picketed, and their persons in danger—met to apply to Government for protection, the advice given at the meeting was that which had often before been acted upon. 'Let us,' they said, 'keep off the subject of wages, for on that we shall never agree.' The reasons for this disagreement are obvious: labour to the capitalist is a commodity, and a material of manufacture; if it were otherwise, wages would be alms, and, divested of the productive character, could only be afforded until the property of the employer was divided. The price of this commodity to an individual is immaterial, provided he does not obtain it upon worse terms than his neighbour. There was more profit to the master-weaver when cotton was 2*s.* per pound, and wages 15*s.* a week, than now, when the first is about one-fourth, and the last about one-half, what they respectively were. The situation, moreover, of no two masters is precisely the same, and therefore, if they united to insure the supply of all their wants at like prices, those

who, by using improved machinery, could work up inferior kinds of cotton into the same numbers as older mills produce from a more expensive wool; those also who, from their local situation, were relieved from the expense of inland carriage—which, with all the facilities hitherto existing, has been at times greater by canal from Manchester to London than by sea from Liverpool to Calcutta; those, again, who are placed where power, from water or coal, is cheap; in short, those possessing advantages which, within a circle of a few miles, are frequently sufficient to make a difference of from 15 to 20 per cent., would inevitably drive away their less fortunate competitors. Let anyone amongst the masters propose, at any given period, that wages should be, for example, lowered 50 per cent., would not every master who had a stock of goods know that, in proportion to this reduction, his property would be deteriorated, and would not such a proposition be strongly resisted? The slightest examination of the difficulty with which a combination of masters, forced into existence by the workmen, has been for a short time maintained—as that at Ashton in 1830, and one or two of a similar character since—will show that voluntary unions of this description can never be anticipated. The workmen there turned out from fifty-two mills at once, and it was no fault of their committee that they did not, throughout South Lancashire, cease to work in all factories spinning the common number (forties) of twist on December 27, 1830. The endeavour was to raise wages, and not to prevent a reduction, and consequently the masters giving the increased price worked to a disadvantage as compared with other districts. The millowners for a few weeks were, for the first time, owing entirely to the unfairness of their opponents, true to each other. A bond, with a 500*l.* penalty, was however obtained from each member, in order to insure fidelity. The losses sustained upon this occasion were various, but were especially heavy upon those who, uniting weaving with spinning, had to obtain yarn from great distances, and at enhanced prices. The state of wages also precluded, at that time, any chance of a permanent or

successful union of employers. According to the list produced (January 20th, 1831), at the meeting of Ashton masters and workmen, the prices paid for the same descriptions of work, in the same town, ranged from 3*s.* 4*d.* to 5*s.* per 1,000 hanks; and the highest sums were frequently given where the oldest machinery was employed, because the union had there accidentally acquired the greatest power. The proprietor, who had thus to bear up against a twofold disadvantage, was not likely to join with those who were systematically underworking him, any more than his fortunate rivals would oppose a state of things so advantageous to themselves. It is, *de facto*, the disunion or competition of employers that at once creates the necessity of unions of workmen, and renders them effective. Reduction of wages almost universally proceeds from needy and individual employers, who thereby seek to compensate for the disadvantages under which they labour in competing with the men of capital. The evidence taken in 1831, before a Committee of the House of Commons, bears indisputable testimony to this fact. 'A needy manufacturer,' it says (p. 366), 'is stated to have lowered quiltings a penny a yard, upon which the other masters declared the reduction unnecessary, but asserted that they would be obliged to reduce in like manner, in consequence of their being undersold.' And again (p. 399), 'one of the best and most humane masters in Manchester reduced his silk-weavers, telling them that some person unknown had lowered the weavers' wages, which obliged him to do so too, as he found himself undersold.'

As, however, the price of goods is fixed by the cheapest producer, so the cost of labour is determined by the person who can obtain it at the lowest rate; and thus, by a very simple process, wages are made to fall, without the intervention of any mysterious agency, conjured into existence by a certain class of political economists. It has been well and truly said, by practical thinkers, that the masters have occasionally been amongst the most efficient supporters of combinations of the men, not only by contributions, direct and indirect, but by bringing themselves

into such a condition by excessive rivalry, as at once to provoke the formation, and to insure the triumph, of closely-united societies of workmen. The Select Committee of 1824, however, treated masters and men alike in the resolutions they adopted on the subject of combinations. The Committee said—'That it is absolutely necessary, when repealing the Combination Laws, to enact such a law as may efficiently, and by summary process, punish either workmen or masters, who by threats, intimidation, or acts of violence, should interfere with that perfect freedom which ought to be allowed to each party, of employing his labour or capital in the manner he may deem most advantageous.' The great business, therefore, of the combinations of artisans, is to repel the invasion of low-priced labour, since employers must necessarily give the ordinary rate of wages, if those offering to work at low prices are kept at a distance.

The Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons, in 1825, is a valuable document. It formed the groundwork of a highly useful statute.* 'In providing for the security,' says the Report, 'of those who may engage in any association to obtain a better remuneration for their labour, your Committee feel it incumbent upon them to recommend that every precaution should be taken to ensure a safe and free option to those who, from whatever motive, may have no inclination to take a part in such associations'—'that those who wish to abstain from combinations should be enabled to do so, and continue their service, or engage their industry, on whatever terms or to whatever master they may choose, in perfect security against molestation, insult, or personal danger, of what kind soever. To this your Committee attach the highest importance, as being indispensably necessary, not less to the real interest of the working-classes, than to the public peace.'

The Act of 5 Geo. IV. c. 96—in which, as in the preceding extracts, may be traced the master-hand of Huskisson—besides rendering legal combinations of workmen

* 6 Geo. IV.

to advance or fix the rate of wages, to alter the hours of working, to decrease the quantity of work, to induce others to quit or to return to work, &c., provided no violence is used, also enacts that forcing masters or workmen, by intimidation or violence, to comply with the demands of the union, shall subject the offender, on being convicted before two justices, upon the evidence of two witnesses, to two months' imprisonment and hard labour, without appeal. The 6th of Geo. IV. c. 129 was purposely framed to render this penal part of the former statute stronger and more available. The Committee therefore recommended that six months' imprisonment, with or without hard labour, should be given; they also suggested a summary jurisdiction, and that one witness, instead of two, might be sufficient for a conviction. The Legislature, however, only adopted these recommendations in part, and the law is, perhaps, less effective in practice than the one of 1824: for although three months' imprisonment with hard labour, and the testimony of one person, were introduced, yet the provision by which an appeal to Quarter Sessions was allowed, rendered the law almost inoperative.

The existing combinations of artisans are of two kinds: first, the Trades' Unions, or the combining together of the operatives of particular trades, in order either to sustain or to increase the remuneration for their own description of work; and, secondly, the National Association for the Protection of Labour, composed of numerous trades-unions, and having for its object 'the prevention of the reduction of wages from the amount received in each trade at the time of entering the association.'

Each of these institutions levy a fund from their members, and are managed by committees chosen from the subscribers. The first duty of a trades-union is to oppose all reduction of wages; the second, to cause a rise of wages, whenever practicable; and the third, to convert non-unionists into unionists, either by persuasive or by coercive means, the former being generally preferred.

CHAPTER II.

STRIKES IN THE COTTON MANUFACTURE.

We have traced the rise and progress of combinations amongst the working-classes, from the earliest period to the time when the law was repealed which prohibited the combining together for restriction of purposes; and we have seen that the sole object of these combinations has been to regulate the rate of wages—the employer on the one hand, and the employed on the other, wishing to depress or to elevate them to the point which they considered most conducive to their respective interests. Neither party, however, appear to have had the slightest notion that wages are dependent upon laws which defy artificial control, and that by the most nicely-contrived arrangement they can only be influenced or modified to a certain degree. The rate of wages is entirely dependent upon the law of supply and demand, like the price of commodities, be they what they may; and it is the efficient demand, the will and the power to purchase, combined with the supply, that really regulates the selling price of all things —and that likewise of labour.

These combinations, or rather strikes—for, since the law of 1824–25 rendered combinations legal, the various unions of working-men to regulate wages have been thus designated—have aimed principally at one thing: namely, either to sustain or to increase the remuneration for the work upon which those who struck were respectively employed. The strikes in the cotton manufacture were no exceptions to the rule, though they slightly varied from each other in detail. Owing to a peculiarity in the manufacture of cotton, the trades-union wields a greater power over it

than that body does over any other branch of trade in the United Kingdom. The spinners do not form a greater portion than one-tenth of those employed in a cotton-mill, but their labour is absolutely necessary to the working of the establishment; consequently, by refusing to work themselves, they force all their fellow-workmen to be thrown out of employment at the same time. Thus, however unwilling nine-tenths of the workpeople in a factory may be to strike, they have no power of refusal in the matter, but are subject to the uncontrolled and despotic sway of the remaining tenth, who can order them to cease working whenever it suits their will and pleasure. This dependence of certain workmen on others exists partially in every trade where there is a division of labour, but in no manufacture where the same quantity of fixed capital is employed is the disproportion equally great. As the way in which this power has been exercised, and the general character of spinners' unions, will best be seen in their acts, we shall briefly summarise the principal turn-outs to which they have given rise.

The most widespread and continuous strike that has ever taken place in the cotton manufacture was that which occurred in 1810, when the spinners in the mills of Manchester, Stockport, Macclesfield, Staleybridge, Ashton, Hyde, Oldham, Bolton, and as far north as Preston, simultaneously left their work, and, had the strike continued a little longer, the whole of Scotland would have joined it. As it was, 30,000 persons were thrown out of employment; many of these paraded the streets of the above-mentioned towns during the day, shouting and hooting at the persons who, as they supposed, were inimical to their cause. Disturbances of the peace were frequent; the authorities were inefficient for the protection of property; several masters were unable to leave their mills, for fear of some violent outrage; and such workmen as were obtained, to supply the place of the seceders, were held prisoners in the establishments where they worked. The direction of this strike was carried on by a congress at Manchester, which was formed of delegates sent from

all the principal mills. The chief leader of the turn-out was one Joseph Shipley, a man of influence over his fellow-workmen, exercising almost supreme control. During this turn-out the men who had struck were supported by the contributions of those who were in work, and the sums so collected amounted for a considerable period to nearly 1,500*l.* weekly, of which Manchester alone paid upwards of 600*l.* This fund was for some time sufficiently large to enable the congress to make a weekly payment of 12*s.* to the spinners who had struck; but the contributions, and consequently the allowances that flowed from them, gradually fell off, till they at length ceased altogether, and those who depended upon them were literally consigned to destitution.

The principal object which the workmen had in view was to raise the wages in the country districts to a level with those in Manchester. In that town the wages, at the period mentioned, were higher than in the surrounding places. The reasons for this difference were that Manchester was the mart for the sale of nearly all the yarn and goods which were manufactured: there the principal machinists resided, and that town enjoyed the facilities for obtaining the raw cotton, hardly equalled by any other city in the kingdom. The country spinners, deprived of these advantages, were obliged to keep the wages of their workmen at a lower point, otherwise they would have been unable to get the same profit on their capital as their Manchester rivals did—that was, the average rate of profit, without which they must have ceased manufacturing. The ability to get their work performed at lower prices than at Manchester, was the condition of their continuance in the business. At that time 4*d.* was paid in the country parts for spinning a pound of cotton No. 40, and 4½*d.* in Manchester, and to raise the country wages to the latter sum was the aim of the union. The attempt, however, met with the most signal failure, and drew with it a punishment which, if we consider those engaged in it, can scarcely be termed excessive or undeserved. When the contributions of those in work failed, such of the men as

had laid by money in the days of prosperity, resorted to it for support, and thus were consumed in a hopeless warfare the hard-earned savings of years of industry. The feeling which prompted this sacrifice deserves praise, however we may regret its misdirected energy. The required advance of wages was not obtained in a single instance, and, after four months of protracted misery, the men returned to their work, some even accepting employment at the rate of 2*d.* per pound, instead of 4*d.*, which they had been previously earning—thus submitting to a reduction of 50 per cent. on their wages, to raise which everything but existence had been staked.

The principal cause of strikes in the cotton-trade has been the introduction of improved machinery, and especially the enlargement of mules, by means of which the number of spindles a spinner is capable of superintending has been continually increasing. Workmen, however, employed on improved machinery seldom engage in strikes against it; and, when induced so to do, it has generally been owing either to the threats or persuasion of others. And for this simple reason. A master, on the introduction of an improved machine into his mill, usually bargains with those he employs to divide the profit of working at it between them and himself. He stipulates to pay them less per piece, but still at such a rate that, owing to the greater power of the machine, they shall be able to take home more earnings at the end of the week than they would have done had they worked at the old machinery. Such a bargain is obviously advantageous to the workmen who accept it, but necessarily injurious to the interests of both masters and men in those manufactories where the improved machine is not introduced. The proprietor of the new method is enabled to undersell his competitors in the market, or (if he sells at the same price) to gain more than the ordinary rate of profit, and this excites the jealousy of other manufacturers. This is the natural development of progress, and ought to be encouraged rather than repressed. Yet several of the masters in the cotton-trade have been imprudent enough to instigate the

workmen to turn out against the manufacturers who were the first to enlarge their mules, suggesting to the men that those who used these improved machines should be compelled to pay at the same rate per piece that was given in other factories, or that there must be a general fall of wages to those who worked at the unimproved mules. The union was not slow to adopt these suggestions, and frequently acted upon them; yet the attempts to engross, on the part of the workmen, the profits of improved machinery have ended in failure, for, were they successful, there would quickly be an end to all improvement whatever.

In the year 1824 the spinners in Hyde turned out, much against their will, and solely at the dictation of the union. The reason given for the turn-out was, that the Hyde spinners were working for wages below the regular rate, inasmuch as they were paid 3*s.* 7*d.* per 1,000 hanks of No. 40 cotton, while in other places 1*s.* more was given for the same quantity of work. But the machinery on which the Hyde spinners worked was so superior, that they could, at these comparatively low prices, earn more weekly than the neighbouring spinners, who, however, insisted that their Hyde brethren were paid lower wages than themselves, and therefore ought to turn out; whereas it is obvious that they were paid higher wages, in fact, than were given elsewhere. The result of this strike was that the men, after enduring the greatest hardships, and having cost the combination between 3,000*l.* and 4,000*l.*, returned to their work at the same wages which they had struck to raise.

In 1829 another turn-out took place, which also originated in the introduction of improved machinery. Several masters had erected mules, carrying from 400 to 500 spindles, which enabled the spinners who worked at them, though they received a less sum in the proportion of 3 to 5 for a given quantity of work, to earn an equal amount of wages with those who were employed on the old machinery. Twenty-one mills and 10,000 hands were thrown idle for six months by this strike, which,

according to the evidence given before the Factory Commission, entailed evils on the operatives, generally, from which it took some time to recover. The men, however, having passed the usual round of privations, returned to work at a reduction of wages; and this conclusion of the turn-out was brought about in spite of the contributions of those who were in work (at one time amounting to no less than 2*s.* 9*d.* weekly per man), to support those on strike. This strike, however, was sullied with the dismal crime of assassination, which threw a dark and lurid glare over the proceedings of the most active agents in the strike. Mr. T. Ashton was shot—murdered, in fact, in cold blood.

In 1830 a strike likewise occurred of more than ordinary magnitude, and threatened at one time extreme violence on the part of the strikers. At Ashton and Staleybridge 3,000 spinners left their work, by which 52 mills and 30,000 persons were thrown out of work for ten weeks. On this occasion it was necessary to send 1,000 additional troops to that part of the country to preserve order; and had it not been for the judicious measures of the commandant of the district (Colonel Shaw), great destruction of life and property in all probability would have taken place. The men, however, returned to their work at the same wages which they had been previously receiving.

The Committee of the Manchester Union, like all men who are self-invested with power, acted with the most despotic authority, and ordered strikes to take place without the slightest regard for those who were their immediate victims. Amongst other cases in point, that of Mr. Chappel, a Manchester manufacturer, may be cited. The evidence of this strike was given before the Factory Commission, and Mr. Chappel was brought by it to the verge of ruin. That gentleman stated in his evidence that—

> The last turn-out took place on the 16th October 1830, and continued till the 17th January 1831. The whole of our spinners, whose average wages were 2*l.* 13*s.* 5*d.*, turned out at the instigation of the delegates of the union. They said they had no fault to find with their wages, their work, or their masters, but the union obliged them to turn out. The same week three

delegates from the Spinners' Union waited upon us at our mill, and dictated certain advances in wages, and other regulations, to which, if we would not adhere, neither our own spinners nor any other should work for us again. Of course we declined, believing our wages to be ample, and our regulations such as were necessary for the proper conducting of the establishment. The consequences were, they set watches on every avenue to the mill night and day, to prevent any fresh hands coming into the mill—an object which they effectually attained, by intimidating some, and promises of support to others, which I got into the mill in a caravan, if they would leave the work. Under these circumstances I could not work the mill, and advertised it for sale without receiving any applications, and I also in vain tried to let it. At the end of 23 weeks the hands requested to be taken into the mill again on the terms that they had left it, declaring, as they had done at first, that the union alone had forced them to turn out.

The contributions levied by order, on those in work, varied according to the exigencies of the case in hand. Sometimes they amounted to 4*d.* or 6*d.*, and even 5*s.* or 6*s.* weekly, while some workmen were known ostentatiously to have contributed their guineas. The sums given were fixed by the Committee, and the decision was printed on a scrap of paper, a copy of which was sent to each of the members, and served for a pass-ticket when they attended their meetings. The following is a copy of the ticket :—

NOTICE.

To the Members of the Lancashire Trades' Unions.

GENTLEMEN,—At a meeting held at the Prince's Tavern, on Thursday evening, it was unanimously agreed that the contributions should be sevenpence per week for a few weeks—viz., fourpence for men out of work, one penny for Time Bill,* and twopence for the Grand Lodge expenses. All moneys to be paid at the Saint Peter's Tavern, as usual.

(Signed by a Committee of Eighteen.)

The members of the society, it appears, were constantly falling into arrear with their subscriptions, and then, by the rules, they were disabled from receiving allowances if they

* This refers to the charges for sending delegates to London, in support of the Ten-hour Factory Bill.

should be thrown out of work. But the union in such cases were in something like a cleft stick: it could not, in general, refuse to support its members, for otherwise the latter declared that they should be compelled to take work for any wages that were offered them, and the object sought by the union—that of keeping up the price of labour—would by these means be defeated.

If any combination could answer the expectations of the working-men, this Manchester Spinning Union, it might fairly be imagined, would be the one. This union brought the most extended manufacture in the world under its immediate authority; it embraced in its power three kingdoms; its ramifications were in almost every direction; it exercised, by the peculiar nature of the manufacture, control over ten times its own number of workmen; it showed the reality of these pretensions by keeping thousands out of employ for six months at a time; every favourable circumstance concurred to establish its efficiency, and it kept up the rate of wages: yet the members, as a body, failed to draw from these advantages one iota of benefit. The reason was simple enough: the society were at war with the great laws which govern industry, and which are as immutable as the law of gravitation, or the periodic rotation of the planets.

The wages of spinners, however, were kept up to an average rate of at least 30*s.* per week, the prospect of receiving which attracted to the pursuit many who might otherwise have taken themselves to other employments. The work not being sufficient for all, the union was compelled to make the supernumeraries—in order to prevent them from beating down the rate of wages, by working under the combination-prices—a weekly allowance for their support; and the subscriptions for this purpose, as well as other expenses, to which they were put in maintaining the union, were so heavy, that the sum distributed amongst the unionists in wages was not greater than that of other occupations, so that their earnings were only nominally high, and really not above the ordinary level.

It has been suggested that the union would have been

able to attain its object by limiting the number of those who were admitted to the business; but this was an impossibility, for one especial reason among others—that the last resort of its power (a strike) invariably introduced new workmen, and thus the end of the union was defeated by the very means taken to obtain it. More than 300* persons were instructed in spinning, owing to the turn-out in Ashton in 1825; and Mr. Lees states, in his evidence, that every general turn-out, without exception, ended in a reduction of wages immediately after, on account of the influx of fresh hands causing a superabundance of labour.

From the evidence relating to the cotton-trade taken before the Factory Commission, it appears that the spinners were invariably the most strenuous, and in many cases the only, supporters of the Ten-hour Limitation Bill. It is likewise shown by the Report that the spinners were nearly the sole employers of the children, and consequently answerable for their cruel treatment. Why then, it may fairly be asked, did not the spinners leave the promotion of the Bill to that portion of their fellow-workmen, who could have supported it with a decent regard to consistency? Those who have not penetrated the secret motives of the spinners may think this surprising; the circumstances, however, admit of an easy solution.

We have stated that the high wages given in the spinning trade caused a greater number of persons to enter it than the trade could employ, and that the superfluous labourers received a weekly stipend from those who were in work, to prevent them from engaging themselves under the combination-prices. The union calculated that if the Ten-hour Bill passed, and all the factories worked one-sixth less time, one-sixth more mills would have been built to supply the deficient production. The effect of this movement, according to the speculation of the union, would have been to cause a fresh demand for workmen; and those who were out would be prevented from draining the pockets of those who were in work, and thus render their wages actually as well as nominally high. Here we have

* Factory Commission.

the secret source of nine-tenths of the clamour for the Ten-hour Factory Bill; and there is every reason to believe that the advocacy of that Bill by the workmen was neither more nor less than a *ruse* to raise wages, although one of the clumsiest contrivance; since it is quite plain that no legislative enactment, whether of ten or of any other number of hours, could possibly have saved that *ruse* from signal failure.

CHAPTER III.

THE PRESTON STRIKE.

THE Preston strike was marked by similar features to those we have just noticed in the cotton manufacture of Manchester and the surrounding locality, and ended just as disastrously to the operatives who were engaged in it, while at the same time it inflicted a great loss upon the community who were in the immediate and surrounding district. We have limited the details of the strike as much as possible, for the repetition of similar facts, created by similar circumstances, and brought about by similar means, becomes monotonous and uninteresting, and can scarcely contribute in any way to the solution of the problem which is involved in such transactions. Suffice it, therefore, to state that the operatives of Preston struck work on November 5, 1836. The strike lasted thirteen weeks, and the number of persons thrown idle by it were classified as follows:—

660 Spinners
1,320 Piecers, children employed by the spinners
6,100 Cardroom hands, reelers, and powerloom-weavers
420 Overlookers, packers, engineers, &c.

Making 8,500 persons in all.

The spinners, who only numbered 660, were the only parties who voluntarily left their work, and who threw the others out of employment, so that the 7,840 remaining were completely dependent upon them. The sacrifice, on the part of the piecers, reelers, overlookers, packers, and engineers, was severe in the extreme, and the more severe as it was imposed upon them much against their will. The

following estimate was made of the pecuniary loss to all classes of the operatives in consequence of the strike:—

	£	£
The wages of the 660 spinners for 13 weeks, at 22*s.* 6*d.*		9,652
Wages of 1,320 piecers „ 5*s.* 6*d.*		4,719
Wages of 6,520 cardroom hands, weavers, overlookers, engineers, &c. for 13 weeks, averaging 9*s.*		38,142
Estimated loss sustained by handloom-weavers, in consequence of the turn-out		9,500
Estimated loss sustained by clerks, casters, mechanics, dressers, sizers, &c. in consequence of the turn-out		8,000
Total		70,013
From which must be deducted—		
Estimated amount of wages earned during the partial resumption of work, between January 9 and February 5	5,013	
Estimated value of relief given by masters	1,000	
Other private charity and parish relief	2,500	
Allowance to the spinners and piecers from the funds of the union	4,290	
		12,803
Leaving a net pecuniary loss, to the whole body of the Preston operatives, of		57,210
But, to the town at large, it may be said that the loss of the whole sum of £70,013, as the amount of the deductions, was mostly of a charitable nature. The loss to the masters—being three months' interest of £800,000, some of which, being sunk in capital, was not only unproductive, but was taking harm from being rendered useless—was estimated at		45,000
And the loss sustained by the shopkeepers, from loss of business, bad debts, &c.		4,986
Making a total loss to the town and trade of Preston, in this unavailing struggle		£107,196

The masters, however, carried the day, and the men had to ask for work at prices much lower than those for which they struck. This strike, including the families of the 8,000 odd operatives, reduced from twenty to thirty thousand human beings at once to a state of starvation.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NOTTINGHAM STRIKES.

In White's *History of the Town and County of Nottingham* we find a brief sketch of, perhaps, the first strike of any importance upon record. There are men now living who recollect the circumstances connected with that event. The principal leaders of the strike suffered the extreme penalty of the law, and such was the state of public feeling and intelligence at the period, that there was a general and deep sympathy in their favour. The times, happily, have changed since 1811, and a better spirit has come over the public mind than was exhibited when the *Luddites* destroyed the 'very means by which they earned their bread.'

In February 1811, the hosiery trade of Nottingham and the neighbourhood was in an extremely depressed state, and, as a consequence, large numbers of workmen were reduced to pauperism and the most dire distress. On the 11th of March, great numbers of the country framework-knitters assembled in the marketplace, and expressed a determination to take vengeance on their employers, who had reduced the prices paid for making stockings. Several meetings were held, and the framework-knitters resolved to organise themselves, with those of Nottingham and other places, for the purpose of advancing wages, and destroying such improved machinery as they supposed injurious to manual labour. Secret midnight meetings were held in various parts of the county, attended by delegates from other districts, who attributed their distress mainly to the introduction of what were then termed *wide machines*, in some of which

several stockings were woven at one time, while in others shapeless pieces were made for low-priced stockings, called *cut-ups*. Bands of the *Luddites* prowled about at night, to destroy the obnoxious machines; but they were so disguised, and so organised, that very few of them were brought to justice, as compared to the number engaged in the undertaking. Upwards of 200 stocking-frames were broken in the short space of three weeks; and one manufacturer had 63 destroyed in a single night, besides other property connected with his trade. The system under which these deluded men acted was called *Luddism*, which was derived from one Ludlam, a youth of Leicestershire, who, when ordered to 'square his needles' by his father, a framework-knitter, took his hammer and beat them into a heap. The destructive operations of the Luddites were repeated at intervals from 1811 to 1817, in which period upwards of one thousand stocking-frames and a number of lace-machines were destroyed in the county of Nottingham, and the evil spread itself into the counties of Leicester, Derby, Lancaster, and York: in the two latter counties, the object of the Luddites was to destroy the machines which had been introduced to diminish hand-labour, but the frame-breakers in the hosiery and lace trades had not this grievance to complain of. The Nottingham and Leicester men, however, complained of a diminution in prices, occasioned by the repeal of the Act of the 5th of Elizabeth: until this statute was repealed, the framework-knitters were paid by printed statements, drawn up by both parties, the deviation from which, in 1811, and the introduction of wide or cut-up frames, caused the riots, which continued, with various intermissions, till 1817. The plan adopted by the rioters was to assemble in parties of from six to sixty, as circumstances required, under a supposed leader, styled *General Ludd*, or *Ned Ludd*, as the humour might seize them; and whoever assumed either of these titles had the supreme command of the party, some of whom, armed with swords, pistols, firelocks, and other destructive implements, were placed as guards, whilst others, having hammers, axes, &c.,

entered the houses and destroyed the frames. In consequence of the continuance of these outrages, a large military force was despatched to the locality, and two of the metropolitan police-magistrates, assisted by other officers, presided at Nottingham, with the view of discovering the ringleaders; but, although a secret committee was formed, and supplied with a large sum of money for the purpose of obtaining private information, no discoveries of any importance were effected, and the offenders continued their devastations with redoubled violence. A royal proclamation, however, was issued, offering 50*l.* reward for the apprehension of any of the offenders; but this only tended to inflame the frenzy of the men, who then began to plunder the farmhouses both of money and provisions, declaring that 'they would not starve whilst there was plenty in the land.' The number of unemployed families who were relieved out of the poor-rates, in the three parishes of Nottingham, on the 30th of January 1812, amounted to 4,248, consisting of no fewer than 15,350 individuals, or nearly one-half of the then population.

In 1813, eighteen Luddites, some of whom were guilty of murder and arson, were hung at York; and in the same year an act was passed, which made it death to break a stocking-frame. Seven Luddites were also transported from Nottingham, and several of the leaders in Leicestershire, in 1816 and 1817, were executed in front of the County Gaol. Since that period the framework-knitters, too miserably paid, have periodically had recourse to more temperate and more sensible measures, in their endeavours to better their condition; and in 1819, those in Leicester and the neighbourhood formed themselves into a union, in which those who were employed contributed to the support of the unemployed, in order to prevent the decline in wages, which had fallen nearly one-half since 1815. In this undertaking they were assisted by the contributions of the benevolent, to the amount of more than 3,000*l.*, as well as by loans of money, and the assistance of the principal manufacturers; and about the close of the year

1823, things began to take a turn, trade being so much improved that there was scarcely a man out of employ. The Frame-knitters' *Union* was dissolved, having distributed, during a period of four years, no less than 16,182*l.* amongst the unemployed. The wages, however, of the frame-knitters continued to decline, until they reached little more than an average of 5*s.* per week, after deducting frame-rents and other 'shop-charges,' though certain expert hands could earn twice that sum.

There is a feeling of painful depression while tracing the history of the stocking-weavers and the general Nottingham and Leicester trades. In 1843 a petition, signed by upwards of 25,000 framework-knitters of Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, and Derbyshire, was presented to the House of Commons, praying for an enquiry into their distressed condition, arising from the low rate of wages, the enormous exactions for frame-rent, the prevalence of the truck system, and the manufacture of spurious articles called *cut-ups*. In February 1844, Her Majesty issued a Commission, appointing R. M. Muggeridge, Esq., to enquire into their grievances. In the course of his laborious enquiry he examined a great number of workmen and masters, and collected a large body of information, which has been published in his copious report; from which it appears that the average clear weekly earnings of the framework-knitters, in twenty-seven parishes in Leicestershire and the adjoining counties, varies from 4*s.* to 8*s.*—Hinckley being only 5*s.* 3*d.*, Bosworth 4*s.* 6*d.*, Ibstock 4*s.*, and Sheepshead 5*s.* 6*d.* In Leicester, those employed upon what are termed season fabrics are much better remunerated, one class earning from 9*s.* to 12*s.*, and others from 12*s.* to upwards of 20*s.* per week; but, during a great part of the year, these are generally only half employed. The heaviest grievance complained of in this enquiry was the *frame-rents*, which vary from 1*s.* to 3*s.* per week on frames that may be bought secondhand at from 4*l.* to 12*l.*, and the full week's rent is charged when only half employed. Many of the frame-smiths, and also persons not otherwise connected

with the trade, let frames to hosiers and middlemen, or to master framework-knitters, who rent or own several frames, and employ journeymen to work up the materials which they receive from the manufacurers. To prevent the frauds to which the journeymen are often subject, the masters are now compelled, by an Act of Parliament (passed in 1845), to supply them with *tickets*, stating the warehouse prices of the different kinds of work. It was also stated that some of the middle-masters and bag-hosiers (small manufacturers), either directly or indirectly, compel the journeymen to take most of their wages in *stuff*, notwithstanding the Acts of Parliament, passed in 1832 and previous years, to enforce the payments of wages in money. This truck system was confined principally to the manufacturing villages, and, having been much checked of late years, we believe it is nearly extinct, as it was not only highly injurious to the money-paying masters and the shopkeepers, but also to the workmen at large.

The hosiery manufacture is the staple trade to which Leicester owes its prosperity, and the increase of its population, during the present century, from about 16,000 to upwards of 60,000 persons. Leicester may now be considered the principal seat of this branch of industry, especially of worsted hose and fancy articles, there being more stocking-frames in Leicestershire than in any other county. The total number of these frames in the United Kingdom, at different periods, have been estimated as follows:—

Year.		No.	Year.		No.
1669	frames	660	1812	frames	29,590
1714	„	8,000	1832	„	33,000
1753	„	14,000	1844	„	48,482
1782	„	20,000			

The number of frames in Leicestershire, in 1812, was estimated at 9,083; in 1832, at 11,200; and in 1844, at 20,861. In the latter year there were 16,382 frames in Nottinghamshire, 6,797 in Derbyshire, 930 at Tewkesbury, 2,605 in Scotland, 265 in Ireland, and the remainder were in small numbers in various parts of England. The total

number of *wide frames* now in the counties of Leicester, Nottingham, and Derby, is 8,470; but in 1832 there were only 6,030 in the United Kingdom. Of the frames now in Leicestershire, 11,457 are employed in making worsted, lambswool, and merino hosiery, 6,933 in making cotton goods, and 104 in making silk gloves. In Nottinghamshire, the worsted branch employs only 61, but the cotton 12,440, and the silk 2,094. The ultimate results of the hosiery trade in the kingdom, as shown in a tabular statement in 1844, are to turn imported raw materials, and those of home-growth, of the collective value of 705,900*l.*, into the selling value of 2,562,713*l.*; but as only 304,880*l.* worth of materials are imported, the real gain to the country in 1844, by this trade, was, in wages and profit, 2,257,833*l.* The trade has gradually increased during the quarter of a century which transpired between 1844 (the period when the preceding returns were made) and 1865; and we shall be fully within the mark when we state that the increase has been at least one-fourth of what it was at the period first cited.

In the Report of the Commissioners appointed to enquire into the condition of the framework-knitters,* we find an elaborate and complete analysis of the condition of this class of our manufacturing population; and certainly, if strikes could in any way be justified, as a means of permanently raising wages, they would be in the case of the framework-knitters, and other kindred branches of the hosiery trade. The Report states that:—

Mr. Felkin calculates the total amount paid in wages in the year at 1,049,130*l.*, which, divided among the 42,652 employed frames, would give an annual rate of earnings (estimated at 50 weeks), for each frame, of 24*l.* 12*s.*, or 9*s.* 10*d.* per week. This computation, however, includes the frame and shop charges, which would be on the average 40 per cent., or two-fifths of the earnings, as he confirms in his detailed account of 154 separate cases, miscellaneously selected from the counties of Nottingham, Derby, and Leicester, whose united earnings for a week amounted to 75*l.* 12*s.* 3*d.*, and the charges to 30*l.* 1*s.* 5*d.*, leaving (net) 45*l.* 10*s.* 10*d.*, or 5*s.* 10¾*d.* per frame.

* 1845.

The system of frame-rents and 'charges' is one of the most oppressive that can possibly be conceived. It grinds the poor stocking-weaver almost down to dust; at least, there is little left of his weekly earnings, according to the most trustworthy authorities,* when the rents or 'charges' are deducted from them. The evidence, both of masters and men, is perfectly conclusive and coincident on one point—namely, that the amount of this deduction is regulated by no fixed rule or principle; that it is not dependent upon the value of the frame, upon the amount of money earned in it, or on the extent of the work made; that it has differed in amount at different times and at different places; that the youthful learner, or apprentice, pays the same rent from his scanty earnings as the most expert and skilful workman in the trade from his, of fourfold the amount; and that the practice of this charge has existed for upwards of a century. It is curious to read the form and classification of the stoppages, and how adroitly the poor weaver is mulcted in every direction. They are as follow:—

1. Frame rent.
2. Machine rent.
3. Carrier rent.
4. Shercock rent.
5. Frame standing.
6. Giving workmen material to manufacture.
7. Turning hose from rough side to smooth.
8. Straightening and tying up goods for warehouse.
9. Taking in goods to the warehouse.
10. Winding materials on bobbins for workmen.
11. Seaming or stitching.
12. Needles.
13. Oil for frames.
14. Candles or gas.
15. Coal, or use of waste steam, to heat the shop or factory.
16. Dozenage.
17. Poundage.
18. Fines.
19. Defective work.
20. General superintendence.

Mr. Joseph Chawner, who was examined by the Committee, gave the following illustration of the charges made on one week's earnings of a weaver:—

I have a case here that I have taken down to show the charges; it is an instance in my own shop; it is the expenses attendant upon a yard-wide frame to the journeyman having 1*l.* worth of work from the warehouse:—

* *Plea for Parliament*; by Thomas Winter.

	£	s.	d.
Frame-rent	0	3	6
Stitching	0	2	6
Winding	0	1	3
Standing and taking in	0	0	6
Needles	0	0	4
Candles	0	0	3
Coal	0	0	3
	0	8	7
Work performed	1	0	0
Balance	0	11	5

The rent of frames is generally high in comparison with their cost; they are generally purchased secondhand, at from 4*l.* to 8*l.* for narrow, or for very wide frames 10*l.* to 12*l.* each may be given. Rent is charged by the hosier at the rate of from 9*d.* to 3*s.* per week, according to width and quality; 1*s.* is the rent for the bulk of narrow frames. Other heavy charges are made when the undertaker employs the frame. The average value of frames, during the last half-century, has materially diminished, while the rent, strange to say, has followed an inverse direction.

The following table, which we have derived from Mr. Winter's 'Plea for Parliament'—a valuable contribution to statistical data—shows the width of the frame, the average value, the rent per week, and the price for making the same description of article at the periods stated. The frame here taken is what is called a middle-guage, or between the fine and the coarse construction:—

Year.	Width of frame.	Average value.	Rent per week.	Price for making 24-guage hose, 104 leads.
		£ s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
1815	16 inches	(*a*) 8 14 0	0 9	7 6
1826	" "	6 3 6	1 0	5 6
1840	" "	4 1 0	1 0	4 6
1855	" "	3 0 0	1 0	4 6

This table shows a decline in the money-value of frame property, since 1815, to the amount of 145 per cent., an

increase in rent of 25 per cent., and a decrease of wages of 75 per cent.

The following table exhibits the market prices of all classes and width of frames in inches in Leicester (1855), together with the amount of rent, masters' charges, and winding, needles, light, firing, &c., including the making of the lowest and the highest paid work:—

Inches in width	16	17 to 20	25	30	40	45	50
Amount in value	£ 5	£ 6	£ 7	£ 10	£ 15	£ 17	£ 20
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
Weekly rent, hose, socks, &c.	1 0	1 3	2 0	2 3	2 9	3 3	3 6
Master's charges	0 6	0 6	1 0	1 3	1 6	1 6	1 6
Winding	0 6	0 6	0 9	1 0	1 3	1 3	1 6
Needles, light, and firing	0 5	0 5	0 5	0 5	0 5	0 5	0 5
Total	2 5	2 8	4 2	4 11	5 11	6 5	6 11
The same frames, making gloves or fancy work, rent	1 6	1 6	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .
Master's charges	1 6	1 6	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .
Winding	0 7	0 7	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .
Total	4 0	4 0	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .

In the glove trade, the price of making many articles has been reduced 100 per cent., and the frame-charges raised from 2*s.* 6*d.* to 4*s.* 0*d.* per week.

In the early history of framework-knitting, the Company of Knitters passed a bye-law, under their charter of incorporation, that every person learning, or exercising the 'art and mystery' of framework-knitting, should be a member of the company, and subscribe to its funds; and rules were made to prevent the exportation of frames, and power given to the company's officers to make search for 'fraudulent frames and fraudulent goods,'—that is, frames

and goods made by persons unconnected with the company. The system of 'rent' has been, from its earliest introduction, a subject of dispute and litigation between employer and employed. The private owners of frames let them out for hire, regardless of the restrictions and regulations of the company, and the hirers made in these frames goods of a different description to those recognised by the company. To remedy this evil, as the company deemed it, or rather to uphold their monopoly, the company, in 1745, made a bye-law to the following effect:—'That no member shall hire frames but of such as are members, on pain of paying *one shilling per week* for every frame;' and it is somewhat remarkable that the sum then levied, as a fine for violating the company's bye-law, was of the same amount as the sum now charged as rent for that description of machinery. The frames at that period, and for nearly half-a-century afterwards, belonged to tradesmen, journeymen, and master-stockingers, who then began to have numerous apprentices, some of them as many as fifty or sixty at the same time. As these apprentices became journeymen, greater difficulties, however, stood in the way of individual journeymen working directly for the hosier; but so long as each workman hired his frame, there were no complaints of 'rent and charges,' because he had the full and exclusive right to work that frame as long as he pleased, for whom he pleased, and upon such work as he could obtain. If he could not secure a full week's employment from one hosier, he could apply to another; and, if it suited his convenience, he could work for a separate hosier on every separate day of the week, as the jobbing tradesmen do to this day. That practice prevailed for several years; but, as frames increased in number, the master-stockingers began to monopolise them, and set them up in small shops. This laid the foundation of the present miserable system; and no sooner was what is termed the 'bag-hosier' custom established, than complaints were made to the Legislature.

In 1777, the framework-knitters of Nottingham, Mid-

dlesex, Surrey, Leicester, Derby, Northampton, and Gloucester petitioned Parliament, stating that they were in great distress, and that, with the utmost industry they could exercise, they were incapable of obtaining the common necessaries of life, not only on account of the lowness of their wages, 'but the *payment of frame-rent and other charges* in keeping the frames in working order.' The grievance began with the 'bagman' engrossing the frames, and letting them out to hire. It was the beginning of a powerful and crushing monopoly, on the part of the masters, to exercise the right to charge, on the one hand, a fixed weekly rental for the use of a tool to work with, and, on the other, to reserve to themselves the right to prevent the renter of the tool from having the free and uncontrolled use of it during the time it was rented. Further, when the 'bagman' could not find full employment, he prevented the renter of the tool from working it for other parties. He also exercised the right of only allowing the workmen to begin at a certain hour, and leave off work at another certain hour. To increase, moreover, his power of control, he kept on further engrossing the frames, by which he acquired the means to forestall the markets, and retain the power of making what deductions he pleased. This petition was referred to a Committee of the House of Commons, who agreed that the petitioners ought to have redress; but upon bringing in a Bill, it was, somehow or other, defeated. Another petition was presented the following year, and another favourable report was made, upon which Mr. Meadows, member for the county of Nottingham, introduced a Bill, which was described by Mr. Robert Smith (afterwards Lord Carrington), while speaking in favour of the measure, as one 'moistened and saturated with the tears of the poor distressed families.' This measure was defeated, on the third reading, by the activity and energy of the hosiers, who had organised a powerful Parliamentary opposition to it. This defeat led to riots in Nottingham, and the masters, to appease the men, promised that 'they would remove every grievance;' but that promise has never been fulfilled, and the frame-

work-knitters, from that day (1778) to this, have never ceased crying out against the cruel system of 'rents and charges.' The voice of the peer, the minister of religion, and the philanthropist have all been raised in their behalf, but at present without avail. In 1841, at Leicester, there was a strike against the rent and charges, and a counter-movement amongst the middlemen to perpetuate and (as it proved in the end) to aggravate it, for the amount of charges were increased to a considerable extent. In 1843 the framework-knitters again petitioned Parliament, there being no less than 25,000 signatures to the petition. They repeated their usual prayer, that 'an enquiry into the enormous exactions of frame-rent and other oppressive charges, especially when full employment is not given, should take place.' On this appeal the Government issued a commission of inquiry, which resulted in a very able and luminous report, proving all the allegations in the petitions presented to the House. Sir Robert Peel gave his sanction to a Bill respecting the 'delivery of tickets,'* and partly promised legislation on the frame-rent question.

In 1853 the Messrs. Biggs, of Leicester, issued a notice to the following effect: that 'from and after the 1st June next, the present custom of contracts for labour will be discontinued, and all contracts will be made, *free from rents*, at net rates.' Some few other manufacturers have partially adopted this system, but the great bulk refuse to make any change, and say they never will. The advantage to the men by the change of system, as stated by Mr. Biggs in his evidence in 1855, was as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
The gross or nominal wages of William Foulds and Son, of Quorndon, he says, for two frames, from the end of June 1852 to the end of May 1853 (being 11 months), was	20	18	7
Rent received during the same period	4	14	0
Custom, or 22½ per cent.			

* The hosiers and manufacturers are obliged to deliver out tickets with their work, as to the price given and the quantity of work required, and it is made penal for master-stockingers, or bagmen taking out hosiery to manufacture, not showing their journeymen such tickets when they deliver the material to them to work. This prevents any intermediate agency between the workman and his employer.

	£	s.	d.
Gross or nominal wages of William Foulds and Son, of Quorndon, for same two frames, from the end of June 1853 to the end of May 1854 (11 months), was . .	20	7	5
A penny in the shilling on produce for use of frames, received during same period	1	12	0

Equity, 8½ per cent.

Being a gain to the workman of 12 per cent. upon his earnings.

The workmen in Nottingham on one occasion, in the silk knitted trade, proposed to the masters the following reduction in their rents and charges:—

	Present charges.			*Required alterations.*		
	s.	*d.*			*s.*	*d.*
1st, 2nd, and 3rd sizes .	2	6	. . to		1	9
4th and 5th sizes . .	2	6	. . to		2	0
6th size . . .	2	6	. . to		2	3

Yet this small abatement was refused, and a strike was the result.

The framework-knitters' condition may be briefly summarised thus. He agrees, say, to hire a frame for a week; the master agrees to find him full employment, but he only employs him a portion of the week, in certain days and within certain hours, and refuses to permit the workman to work in a hired frame except upon his material. A workman, for instance, goes on the Monday morning to work, and receives as much material as will last him perhaps six hours; he again goes to the master, for more 'to go on with.' The master says, 'Well, you must come again in the morning—I've not got any stuff.' The man replies, 'Well, I can get a little work from my neighbour, if you have no objection to me working it in this frame, master.' The master rejoins, 'But I have, though, and will not allow it.' This may be the case every day in the week, and at the end the man may only have been employed half the week, and consequently only earned half the wages he would have done had he either been fully employed by the master, or allowed to obtain work elsewhere. The workman could have earned a full employment (12*s.*), but by being only half employed he only earns 6*s.* The master, notwithstanding it was no fault of the workman's not earning more, stops from six shillings, 3*s.* 6*d.*, giving the man 2*s.* 6*d.*, and charges just the same for frame-rent as though

he had furnished the man full employment: the same for the master's superintendence, as though the master had furnished the man with the full amount of material; the same amount for winding for half a week as for a whole week, although the master had not had it 'wound;' and, in fact, he charged the workman exactly the same as though he (the master) had fulfilled his part of the contract, and allowed the workman to earn 12*s.* instead of 6*s.*, and had to receive 8*s.* 6*d.* instead of 2*s.* 6*d.* These facts must speak for themselves.

Notwithstanding the miserable condition of the frame-work-knitters, and the evils they have to contend against, strikes have done them infinitely more harm than good, whenever they have been resorted to for the amendment of their grievances. The strike of the knitters in 1817–18 had an effect, upon our export trade of hosiery, which is felt to this day. In those years the foreign buyer of hosiery, being unable to obtain his usual supplies from the English manufacturer, in consequence of the turn-out, went to Germany to make his purchases. From that period the Germans obtained a hold on the export trade of hosiery, which they have largely increased, and which was mainly acquired by the numerous strikes of the workmen in this country. Chemnitz, in Saxony, sprung up to be the rival of certain of our manufacturing towns in the stocking district, and in neutral markets the Saxon hosiers have long run us hard, especially in low-priced goods.

General strikes, however, are very rare in the hosiery trade; the number of workmen, and their being distributed so widely about, preventing anything like the animosity which is necessary to secure perfect organisation with such a view, to say nothing of the scarcity of funds amongst the men. Nevertheless, partial strikes (sometimes embracing several hands) have occurred; and strikes against particular masters are, and have been, common. Mr. Thomas Carver, in his evidence before the Committee of the House of Commons, said—

When I was in partnership with Mr. Rogers, a strike was made against us, and it was carried through with, perhaps, as bad feeling as it could be. Two or three of our men were inclined to go to

work at the reduced price, or at the old price, whichever the strike was against; but the other men got them into the street and *assed* them, as it was called—that is, they tied them on an ass, and assed them round the town, with their faces to the tail of the animal. This was, of course, a very great annoyance to those hands.

Cases of this sort are the invariable attendants on strikes, even of a partial character; and where direct personal coercion is not used, the moral intimidation, by which they are brought about and maintained, is usually of as tyrannical a character. It very rarely happens that a strike emanates from the workmen who are the personally aggrieved parties; on the contrary, it is by no means uncommon for them to be made the objects of attack and violence for working 'under price,' as it is termed, or for some other infringement of the laws of the union.

It must, we think, be obvious that nothing can be more intolerable than the professed objects for which unions are generally formed—the maintenance of an established list of prices for labour: because, in the first place, they are powerless in controlling the influence on wages which the supply of labour ever bears to the demand for it; and, in the next, the unions have not the means of discerning the amount that the manufacturers can afford to pay for wages, as one only of the elements in the cost of production, which would leave him a profit sufficient to induce him to continue the investment of his capital in the manufacture.

Experience, moreover, has amply proved that, in the few cases in which strikes have been successful, the advantages gained have rarely been more than temporarily maintained, always being forced to give way to the fixed principles by which the rate of wages must be governed. In many cases, after a long struggle, and extensive injury both to masters and men, the latter have been forced to resume work on the terms they had previously turned out against, and occasionally even on less advantageous ones.

Mr. Muggeridge concludes his very able report on the framework-knitters with pointing out the causes of their general distress, and the only possible method by which it can be alleviated. The conclusions at which the learned

commissioner arrives are as sound in principle as they are logical in deduction, and will apply to all circumstances when the questions of labour and wages are brought into consideration. The points established by the evidence are thus enumerated:—

I. That until a very recent period the workmen were, in many instances, paid their wages in goods instead of money; and that at present, though this practice, in a direct manner, has been greatly checked by the exertions of individuals, and local societies established for the express purpose of enforcing the provisions of the Act (1 and 2 Wm. IV., c. 37), on the subject, it is still carried on indirectly, to a great extent, by a large class of employers, who combine, with their occupations in the manufacture, shops for the sale of groceries and provisions, and whom the present law has not been able to reach.

II. That although there is considerable diversity in the condition of the framework-knitters, particularly at different seasons, in different branches of the hosiery manufacture, they are, as a body, in a very depressed and distressed state, from the very low amount of their ordinary earnings.

III. That the leading cause of the low rate of wages earned by the framework-knitters is the disproportion existing between the supply of their labour and the demand for it; the latter being usually deficient, and at all times very irregular; while there is a constant manifest tendency in the former to increase, and none to adapt itself to the irregularities or the amount of the demand.

IV. That this excess of supply arises, primarily, from the accessibility of the trade of framework-knitting to the unemployed labourers of all other classes, and from the facilities with which a knowledge of the trade, especially in the common branches, is acquired.

V. That these facilities admit of the competition of women and children, of which they avail themselves to a very considerable extent; the natural consequence of which is to reduce wages generally, by an undue augmentation of numbers in the labour market, and particularly those of male adult knitters, by lowering them to the standard rate of such competitors.

VI. That this excess of supply is very powerfully influenced and encouraged by the system of frame-rents, and the long-recognised custom of heavy deductions, on one pretext or another, from the wages of the workpeople, which make it the interest of the employers to spread any given amount of work among a larger number of workmen than is necessary to its performance: a practice that is further greatly facilitated by the superabundant amount of machinery which has been created and brought into the trade by others than the legitimate employers in it, as profitable investments of capital, induced by the customary exorbitant rent of the frames.

VII. That no permanent or general improvement in the condition of the framework-knitters can be looked for but by a diminution of their numbers proportionate to the existing demand for their labour, or such an extension of the manufacture as would largely augment the amount of employment. The first of these means is in the exclusive control of the workmen themselves, and can only be produced by abstinence from early or improvident marriages, or by bringing up their families to other occupations—results only to be expected from the slow operation of improved moral cultivation.

VIII. That an extension of the manufacture is most likely to be attained by the improvement of which it appears susceptible in the manner of conducting it, by a more judicious appropriation and division of labour, whereby the cost of production will be diminished; and by an increased appreciation of taste and skill in the designs and patterns of the article manufactured, especially in the fancy branches of the trade.

IX. That an improvement in the quality of most of the goods manufactured is apparently as essential to an increase of permanent demand, as it will probably soon be found to be to the maintenance of the manufacture, even at its present extent; the evidence tending to establish that the spurious qualities of a large proportion of the goods made is calculated to lower the character of the manufacture both at home and abroad.

CHAPTER V.

THE WOLVERHAMPTON STRIKE.

In the year 1851 nine men were tried at the Stafford Summer Assizes for conspiracy, and the victims of the conspiracy were the Messrs. Perry, who had been many years established as tinplate-workers and japanners at Wolverhampton. Mr. Justice Erle * tried the case, and a more competent authority on the subject of strikes could not possibly have been found upon the bench to preside on that occasion. A tinplate-worker, it may be necessary to remark, is a manufacturer of a variety of articles—of teapots, teakettles, candlesticks, bread-tins, coffee-urns, canisters, cash-boxes, jelly-moulds, nutmeg-graters, and numerous other objects used in domestic affairs, the majority of which are fashioned by cutting, stamping, and bending tinplates to certain required forms. The two businesses of japanning and tinplate-working were combined in Messrs. Perry's establishment, and were dependent on each other, so that any delay in supplying the articles of tin kept the japanners in a state of idleness. There were about 100 hands employed in each division of the work, and the men were earning from 20*s.* to 60*s.* per week, according to their industry and skill. In the year 1842 the tinplate-workers (six firms) of Wolverhampton agreed upon a book of prices, or list of the rates to be paid for the manufacture of articles; but the list could not be long adhered to, because machinery was from time to

* Now the Right Hon. Sir William Erle, whom Earl Derby has appropriately placed at the head of the Commission for enquiry into Trades Unions, &c.

time introduced, by which manual labour was saved in regard to particular processes: such, for example, as turning by machinery, instead of by hand, the moulding round the rim of footbaths, and cutting by means of stamps, moved by steam, various pieces which formed parts of objects. The result, however, was that the workmen could earn more than before the machinery was introduced, but the pay per article was necessarily changed when portions were supplied ready to his hand. The list, therefore, fell into disuse, and each firm paid its men by special and individual contracts. The Messrs. Perry were, however, under the impression that they were paying about 10 per cent. higher wages than the average of their trade in Wolverhampton, taking the articles all round, when the strike took place, which was brought about by a new body of men, who had recently come upon the scene of the working-men's operations, and who called themselves the *National Association of United Trades.*

In 1848 the originators of this association, sitting in London, declared that if they could obtain the support of 100,000 workmen, out of the six millions at which they estimated that class, they would, by a subscription of one penny per week, have an annual revenue of upwards of 20,000*l.*, by which a sufficient power would be obtained to control any number of uncombined masters. This declaration drew from Lord Campbell, while presiding in the Court of Queen's Bench, the following remarks:—

'I must confess,' said his Lordship, 'I look with some alarm upon this general association sitting in London, dictating to masters what they shall pay their men, and levying contributions for the support of that society all over the kingdom, which might raise a fund as large as the revenue of some of the sovereign states of Europe.'

On the 2nd of April, 1850, the Messrs. Perry received a letter from the secretary of the National Association of United Trades in London, informing them that they would be visited, on the 8th of the month, by a deputation from head-quarters, together with delegates from the town itself, to discuss a book of prices to be left at the offices,

in the hope of arranging matters satisfactorily between the Messrs. Perry and their workmen. This was at the busy season of the year, when orders were awaiting execution; and Mr. Perry, therefore, met the difficulty with promptitude, and in a spirit of concession. He invited his best men to enter into written contracts with him, and the men, being well satisfied, not only agreed for a certain amount of wages, but to give six months' notice when disposed to terminate the agreement. Mr. Perry, on his part, guaranteed the men their wages, and to give them one month's notice. In the meantime, a man named Preston was observed to neglect his work, and pass from bench to bench to hold a kind of whispered conversation with other workmen, and, being deemed a mischief-making and dangerous man, he was dismissed. On the 8th April, three men from the London Association called, and enquired why Preston was dismissed, to which question Mr. Perry declined to reply. His visitors then declared their call to be for the purpose of settling the disputes between him and his men, so as to prevent the necessity of a strike. The deputation were informed that there were no disputes to settle. Still, they tendered a book of prices for Mr. Perry's assent; and he, in order to gain time, and get his contracts fulfilled, said he would take the prices into consideration. One of the visitors, however, declared himself to be the secretary of the association, and informed the Messrs. Perry that the society could bring any amount of coercion down upon any single firm that might be necessary; that the affairs of the tinplate-workers were in the hands of the association; and that, if the Messrs. Perry did not agree to terms, every workman they had should be drawn off. The visitor also intimated that Preston was a member of the society, and under its protection.

In the interval between the first letter of the association and the final rupture, the Messrs. Perry increased their stock to the utmost degree, and entered into nearly sixty contracts with their best men; and, after various meetings with the delegates of the London Association, they declared that they would have nothing to do with fixing a rate of wages at the dictation of any associated body, whether far or near. The

delegates said they were extremely sorry, and remarked that 'things must now take their course.' This placed the firm in an extremely perplexing and annoying position. Spies of every kind were set to watch their movements, and to dog their steps in every direction. The workmen also began to disappear, and the boys came for their bundles or their tools; so that upwards of sixty out of eighty-five men disappeared in the course of three months, forty-five of whom had bound themselves by contract with the Messrs. Perry. Things, as might naturally be supposed, daily kept getting worse; for the few remaining men neglected their work, and the firm in the long run lost some thousands of pounds.

The Messrs. Perry, however, nothing daunted, advertised for workmen, both at Wolverhampton and at Birmingham, and received numerous applications; but when the men applied to be taken on, they were waylaid, and persuaded to refuse an engagement. One of the firm then went to France, in the hope of picking up some workmen in that country; and, being fortunate to a certain extent, he brought home eight French workmen; but these were all enticed away in the course of six weeks, at the cost of 52*l.*, which was paid by the London Association. Twenty Germans were next induced to locate themselves at Wolverhampton, and of these sixteen remained to the time of the subsequent trial. As workmen, however, could not be obtained, fifty apprentices were taken on, after the tinplate-workmen were reduced to two; but the apprentices were quickly spirited away. Yet these apprentices were turned to what the association would deem a profitable account, for before quitting the shop they injured the tools, cut to waste the tin, and destroyed many of the patterns. Let us now turn to the workmen.

Duffield, one of the nine men who were subsequently tried, had worked for one of the firms for twenty-five years. He was not only a good workman, but a respectable man. Up to the spring of 1850 he appeared to have been prosperous; but he then quitted his work, and accepted office under the London Association at 4*s.* 6*d.* per week, his duties being to seduce men from the factories, and to prevent others from going in. Duffield was one of the spies whom the

Messrs. Perry saw peering about their premises, and waylaying their workpeople.

According to the evidence adduced on the trial, Duffield was in the habit of enticing men to the publichouse, and of making them drunk; of posting placards of an evil tendency on the walls of the town; of inveigling the French workmen as they arrived; of sending old comrades on fool's errands over the country, to keep them out of the way of their employers; of paying them small sums to live upon, and of levying 4*s.* per head, at the week's end, from men who had lost both work and wages. Duffield was condemned to three months' imprisonment in Stafford Gaol; and the witnesses examined at the trial disclosed a somewhat fearful amount of low cunning and of drunkenness, to say nothing of the degrading coercion which was practised by the association, who seduced the men from their work, and the delusion on the part of the men who allowed themselves to be seduced.

The workmen, however, had something to say in defence of their proceedings, and it is nothing but just that they should be heard. In a memorial addressed to the men who signed a testimonial presented to Mr. Edward Perry, the workmen said:—

It is a singular but significant truth, that for nearly a quarter of a century Mr. Perry has been waging war with labour. Strikes have occurred with him, and through him, from first to last. And can it be that the men have been wrong in every contest? or that he alone, of all our manufacturers, has been doomed to deal with unreasonable and exacting servants? No! when a manufacturer is constantly crying out under an evil that does not affect others in like position, what is the inference? Why, just this—that the employer, and not the employed, is the producing cause. Men who have been in the trade longer than Mr. Perry, and have had the privilege of working for honourable and liberal masters—such men, we say, should, at least, know something about the treatment and the reward to which labour is entitled. Such men can be selected from those in antagonism with Mr. Perry, and of whom it would be easy to show, that the experience of themselves and their fathers far exceeds the boasted experience of Mr. Perry, his ancestors, and his friends.

As regards strikes, and the workmen being desirous of their taking place, we have the following sensible remarks:—

It is erroneous (the men say) to suppose that we either desire or enjoy a strike. The injury which might be done to our trade is well known, and we are jealous lest the business of this town be transferred elsewhere. This is no false assertion, neither a vain unmeaning boast. The majority of us are settled here, with our families and our wives; our sons, too, have here found work, and now look forward to the time when they shall supply the places of their fathers. And surely no reasonable man will suppose that we can be desirous of injuring that which provides our daily bread! The thought is unreasonable and absurd—impossible to be entertained, except by one ignorant of the circumstance, that the working-classes have not yet abandoned all sense of discernment. Yes! our declaration is, that we regard all 'strikes' as great though sometimes necessary evils, and the conduct of persons exciting them is reprehensible, and deserves to be condemned by a memorial, *unless good cause can be shown for the movement.*

The loss of wages sustained by the tinplate-workmen during the strike was calculated at 15,000*l.*, and the cost of the trial of the nine men at the Stafford Assizes was estmated at 3,855*l.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

The trial of these tinplate-workers, however, had a very salutary effect upon the working-men of Wolverhampton, and also upon the manufacturing labour of the district for some miles round; for, instead of strikes extending to other branches of manufacture in that thriving town (which at one time was apprehended), the very contrary was the case, and things went on smoothly for a somewhat lengthened period, during which both employer and employed duly recognised their respective interests.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BIRMINGHAM STRIKES.

THE Birmingham strikes—if such small affairs as we are about to record, in relation to so large a town, are deserving of that designation—lie within a very narrow compass. That great hive of industry is rarely affected by such refractory movements as strikes. The reason why it is not so affected is clear and obvious. The manufactures of that thriving town are, generally, of a kind and character which require incessant ingenuity and novelty, and therefore occupy individual minds in a way which is somewhat antagonistic to organisation. Masters and men consult about a new device in jewellery, or for domestic or decorative purposes; and each piece of work is paid for on its own merits, or under its own conditions. Where, moreover, hundreds of masters are employing thousands of hands, no uniform rate of wages can be established; and as for the mechanical kinds of work, everything that can be done by machinery is assigned to it. It is true that there were formerly troubles in the gun-trade, when large orders were given by the Government, on sudden emergencies; but these were so exceptional and so disastrous, that it was found necessary to counteract the effect of them. This was dexterously effected by introducing a minute division of employments, and by an ample use of machinery. When, therefore, a 'turn-out' or 'strike,' in any single branch of the manufacture of guns, has taken place, there has been the minimum amount of mischief from stoppage, and the greater facility of obtaining fresh hands for the performance of an isolated and single process of the manufacture, than though it had been concentrated, as formerly. Birmingham, therefore, has suffered comparatively little from strikes.

The flint-glassmakers' *emeute*, or lock-out, was, however, an exception to an almost general rule. These men belonged to the trades-union, and were coerced, as it were, into a strike, in the same way as other workmen are who form portions of that authoritative body. The rules of the Flint-glassmakers' Friendly Society were revised at a conference held in London in June 1858; and certain provisions decided upon were so indefensible, that the manufacture could not go on while subject to them. For example, the printed rules insisted that all vacancies in the master's establishment should be filled up by the society: the factory secretary applying to the district secretary, and he, if necessary, to the central one, on the occasion of a vacancy, when their officers should supply the man, judging of his abilities, fixing his wages, and using him simply as a glassmaking machine, furnished to order, and capable of yielding a profit. Any member applying to be hired without the consent of the local secretaries, and of the men already in the factory, was to be fined 1*l.*, and not allowed to work. The same penalty was fixed, together with forfeiture of all privileges, if the fine was not paid, for the expense of writing for information, or affording it to another, without the consent of the district secretary and his fellow-workmen. The fine might be increased to 5*l.* by the district authorities, and the appeal was to be to the central committee.

Suffice it to state that these rules seriously restricted labour, and must have proved highly detrimental, if not fatal, to the manufacture. As regards apprentices—a tender point in all union disputes—there was every discouragement shown to their increase of number, and, consequently, every possible impediment placed in their way of being bound. Yet, by a curious contradiction, the flint-glassmakers allowed apprentices to join their society when they had two years of their time to serve.

The men, however, shall tell their own tale. In an appeal to the working-classes of the United Kingdom, issued from Stourbridge, January 13, 1859, the glassmakers say:—

The origin of the dispute was, that at certain works in Stourbridge, a man wanted 14*s.* per week, which was the average wages other manufacturers in that locality were paying. This request was refused by the employer. Another house in Stourbridge requested us to send for a man, and we did, from Glasgow; and when he arrived they refused to engage him, and demanded a lad to be set on to fill the vacancy; and *because the men would not agree to this*, they gave them fourteen days' notice to leave, and each of the employers sent copies of a printed circular to every other employer in the trade, *requesting them not to employ any of the men whose names they then sent*, and the consequence was that the men were refused employment where they went. These were the causes and commencement of the strike, which has now lasted thirteen weeks, and, so long as it was confined to the locality to which it legitimately belonged, we were prepared to support it ourselves, without appealing to the public for assistance in any way whatever. But the employers, finding that the men were firm, and that they had no chance of success, called a meeting of the employers of the Midland Counties, who formed themselves into an association, whose first act was to lock-out several hundred men, for the unpardonable crime of contributing to the support of their brethren in resisting what they deemed a wrong. Their second act was to send deputations to Lancashire, Yorkshire, Scotland, and Northumberland, and they have been successful in inducing the employers of Lancashire and Scotland (with one solitary exception) also to lock their places up; and, when reasoned with upon the unjustifiable proceeding of ruthlessly turning their men out, they tell us they have nothing against us, but they are determined not to allow us to start work again until they have broken up our society, or, at least, rendered it so powerless that its influence shall be paralysed.

The flint-glass employers subscribed a defence fund, and addressed a circular, as the workmen state, to the trade in other localities, expressing themselves prepared for a decisive and determined course of action. They pointed out to the men the right and the necessity of employers being masters in their own business, and gave them the option of either surrendering the obnoxious provisions, or of leaving the works. The men refused to surrender, and the masters, with the exception of three or four, locked out the men on the same day. Upon this proceeding, the

central committee of the union issued a report, boasting of the enthusiasm of the trade, and of the great encouragement it had given to the strike: these boasts were accompanied with the ostentatious declaration, that the Glass-makers' Friendly Society 'would grow and flourish till time should be no more.' The organisation was, however, of an extended character, stringently ruled, opulent, and enthusiastic to an indiscreet degree; yet in four short months it 'came to grief'—the accumulated fund of the union being spent, and the subscriptions of the men still at work, and the money lent by the central society, being alike completely dissipated. After a certain period, when the temper of the hands had had time to cool down to what may be termed a rational heat, the employers proposed an amended set of rules, which the men gladly accepted, and went back to work. The union, however, incurred a debt of 2,000*l*., which it had great difficulty in reducing to the amount which was desirable; for the members considerably decreased when the crisis had passed, and the subscriptions were consequently greatly diminished.

Another instance of a strike at Birmingham, upon a small scale, was furnished by the workmen of a steel-toy manufacturer, which is worth recording, from the interest it excited in that comparatively non-striking town. The manufacture of steel toys comprises pincers, sugar-nippers, turnscrews, vices, hammers, and other small articles. The manufacturer having, as he thought, suitable premises for making files, engaged some hands for that purpose; but at the end of the first quarter, finding that he had sustained a loss, he consulted his workmen as to what course he should pursue. The men advised that certain parts of the work —the 'edging' and 'brushing'—should be entrusted to boys, who were quite equal to such work. This plan was adopted, and everything was proceeding in an orderly manner, when the master found a note which had been slipped under his door, and which threatened that his shop should be shut up the following week, unless he dismissed the boys, whose employment was against the rules of the trade. He disregarded the note; but the

next day he was asked whether he was aware that the file-cutters were going to stop work on the following week. He summoned the file-cutters, and asked them whether this was the case. The answer of the men was that they were going to leave; that they had no complaint to make, but that they were under orders from the secretary of the society at Sheffield. If they submitted to work side by side with boys, when those boys were engaged in men's work, though perfectly competent to do it, the men said they would be marked for outlawry, and no men would ever work with them again. The place for some time was 'picketed,' and, as a writer in the *Edinburgh Review* justly remarked: 'By such tyranny, enforced by brutal acts of burning and blowing-up houses, the men of Sheffield (or those who call themselves so) have acquired and lost great things. They have acquired a reputation for barbarism, cruelty, selfishness, and folly, which places them below the population of any other town in England; and they have lost the large portion of a very fine trade, which might have enriched the place, and made the lowest journeyman prosperous in his line.'

CHAPTER VII.

THE STAFFORDSHIRE COLLIERY STRIKE.

THE narrative of the Staffordshire colliery strike is a sad tale, and soon told. It is the history of a hopeless struggle, which was generated in ignorance of the plainest economic laws, and ended, as all such struggles must end, in painful discomfiture and defeat on the part of the men engaged in it.

The immediate cause of this strike rests in obscurity. During the winter of 1863-64, the trade of South Staffordshire and East Worcestershire in coal and iron improved very rapidly, and the masters at once put up the prices of their respective commodities. Three advances took place in the price of thick coal, making a total rise of 3*s.* a ton. Following the usual custom, wages were increased 6*d.* a day simultaneously with each rise of 1*s.* a ton in coal. The first took place in September, and the second in October, of 1863. The third occurred in January 1864, when the price of thick coal stood at 11*s.* a ton, and wages at 5*s.* a day; thin coal, 10*s.* a ton, and wages, 3*s.* 6*d.* a-day. At this level coal and wages stood, until the middle of June, when it was found that the market would no longer bear such high rates, and that iron also must come down. In consequence of this, notice was given to the workers in thick coal, to the effect that their wages would be brought back to the point at which they stood before the rise in January—namely, thick-coal workers, 4*s.* 6*d.*; and thin-coal workers, 3*s.* 3*d.* a day.

At the same time, the price of thick coal was declared down 1*s.*, and thin coal 1*s.*—making the former 10*s.*, and the latter 9*s.* a ton. Simultaneously also, by the independent action of a single firm—Mr. W. O. Foster, M.P., trading under the name of Messrs. John Bradley & Co.—

finished iron was declared down 1*l.* a ton; and Mr. Foster was enabled to take this course, because he was certain that pig-makers had also reduced the price of the raw material; and it had always been customary for the wages of the miners to follow the direction taken by the prices of finished iron, in the proportions, for the workers in the thick and thin coal respectively, which we have just given.

It had, however, been the usual practice to reduce at the same time the wages of the puddlers, rollers, and others employed in the making of finished iron, in the proportion of 1*s.* a ton with every fall of 1*l.* in finished iron. This practice was not adopted on this occasion. Notice for a reduction in wages was given to the miners, but no notice was given to the ironworkers. This was thought to be the more extraordinary, inasmuch as the proportion between the wages of the ironworkers and the price of iron had recently gone up 1*s.* a ton in favour of the men. They would now, therefore, be left with an advantage of 2*s.* a ton, whilst it was proposed that the miners' wages should be kept rigidly within the rule which had long prevailed. At the time high prices were being obtained for coal supplied to the domestic market, and to the hardware manufacturers in Birmingham and elsewhere. Further, the men asked why the masters could not as well afford to give 5*s.* a day as in 1848, when coal was, they said, selling at as low a figure. It was further maintained that if the masters, while able to afford the loss of the ironworkers' 1*s.*, were not able to afford the additional loss of the colliers' 6*d.* and 3*d.* respectively, they ought, in strict justice, to have spread the reduction of the two smaller sums over both trades, and not to have confined it solely to one, and that the poorer of the two. Complaints were made of hardships to which they were exposed, arising out of the method of getting the coal by charter-masters, locally termed 'butties.' Many of these men keep beer-houses, or publichouses and provision-shops, and require their men to trade with them. Certain of these practices, it is alleged, were winked at by the masters. All these circumstances were discussed at the different union lodges of

the men, and the thick-coal workers resolved that they would not consent to the new terms which their masters proposed.

On the 4th of July, 1864, just six years after the preceding general strike in 1858, the fortnight's notice of the masters having expired, the thick-coal men all turned out. For a time they were joined by the working engineers, and by the men employed at the blast-furnaces in the making of pig-iron; but these, after a short struggle, gave up the contest, and resumed work on the terms proposed by the masters, which were a reduction of 10 per cent. The thin-coal workers in the Bilston and Wolverhampton districts did not at first join the movement, for they accepted the reduction, and were at work, when, by repeated entreaties on the part of the thick-coal men, they too were induced to turn out, some of them without giving notice. This naturally led to magisterial proceedings, and the thin-coal men ultimately all went in and gave notice. On the expiration of that notice they all turned out, but they did not remain out more than a week, and three-fourths of them at once accepted the masters' terms. It will therefore be seen, that the thick-coal men were the first to object to the terms which the masters offered; and the objection became most powerfully displayed among the men who were employed in the domestic trade at West Bromwich, and in the general trade about Dudley and Tipton. In the latter districts the chief employer is the Earl of Dudley. Other masters took the same course; and, seeing that the men intended stoutly to contest the point, they began at once to make arrangements for getting supplies of coal, for carrying on the pig-iron and the finished-iron works, respectively, from other districts. Lancashire, Derbyshire, North Staffordshire, and North and South Wales, were at once applied to. The application met with a ready response, and so great was the demand, that every description of waggon had to be used to bring the coal from those districts. The railway companies were ready to run as many special trains as the ordinary traffic would allow, so that the enormous quantity of 10,000 tons of coal

were daily brought into Staffordshire. The Strike Committee attempted to cut off the supplies, by sending delegates into the districts we have named, with a view to induce the colliers to refuse to get coal to be used in an attempt to defeat the men in Staffordshire. But the attempt was unsuccessful. The colliers at a distance did not believe that they had a right to dictate to their masters as to what market they should send their coal, but were ready to contribute to the support of their brethren on strike. Simultaneously with this refusal on the part of the colliers at a distance, there were evidences at home of a want of unanimity. Men who felt that their masters would ultimately win the day returned to work in small numbers throughout the whole of the district. There were 30,000 out when the strike was at its height in September, but that number had fallen to about 18,000 in the middle of the month. To prevent these from going to work, morning meetings, at between four and five o'clock, were determined upon, and thence detachments moved off in different directions, headed by drums and whistles. Wherever men were met on the road going to work, they were sure to be prevented from going down that day. Usually it required much persuasion to bring about such a result, but when that failed, other means of a less agreeable character were resorted to; and when men succeeded in getting to work unobserved, they were met as they returned, and assailed with the usual epithets of 'black-leg,' and the like, the presence of the police as their guard notwithstanding. A few of the more desperate resorted, for the first time in the history of a colliers' strike in Staffordshire, to the throwing of rough hand-grenades into the houses of the men who had gone to work; and as the threats became more and more vehement, the police had to interfere at the morning meetings, which were ultimately prohibited. The result was that the number of men—encouraged by two troops of Lancers, who were headed by the Lord-Lieutenant of the County, and by the stipendiary magistrate for South Staffordshire—were quickly enlarged, and work in the pits

was very soon resumed. The determination of the masters to defeat the combination was shown in the fact, that where they had to carry on their works with coal brought from a distance, they were paying 4*s.* 6*d.* and 5*s.* more per ton than for the coal of their own district. This was brought about not so much by the difference in the price per ton, as in the difference in the weight at which the coal at both districts was respectively sold. In South Staffordshire the coal was sold in 'boats long weight;' and boats that are guaged to hold 22 tons, not unfrequently carry from 24 to 29 tons, yet the buyer paid only for 22 tons. Nor was the 'butty,' nor the colliery proprietor, paid more; but, notwithstanding the flagrant injustice of the practice, no stand was made against it by the colliery proprietors as a class. All the coal, however, carried by railway was brought 'short-weight.' The great extra cost, therefore, of making iron in South Staffordshire, which results from using the coal of other districts, will be seen more clearly when we state that, at the lowest computation, 2½ tons of coal are required to make 1 ton of pig-iron, and another 2½ tons to convert that pig-iron into finished iron. These are great drawbacks to the ironmasters of South Staffordshire; yet, upon the whole, their men are as well paid as any other men engaged in the same pursuit are.

CHAPTER VIII.

LEEDS AND LOWMOOR LOCK-OUT.

THIS lock-out occurred about the same time as the Staffordshire colliery strike. It lasted about eighteen weeks, and was characterised by similar features to other arbitary cessations from labour. The pecuniary cost of this struggle was extremely onerous to the men, as the number thrown out of work was 1,560. The hammermen were earning from 2*l.* to 3*l.* per week, and their labourers from 8*s.* to 16*s.* The puddlers were earning from 30*s.* to 50*s.*, middle hands 18*s.*, and boys about 8*s.* each; rolling millmen were earning from 30*s.* to 80*s.* each per week.* The loss, after eighteen weeks' strike, to employers, employed, shopkeepers, and others immediately connected with the Lowmoor Ironworks, was estimated at 36,192*l.* 11*s.* 6*d.* The losses also sustained by the men who were engaged in the several strikes which took place at that period were estimated as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
Manchester New Prison.			
To the attempt to settle which labourers should head the procession, and whether bricks should be carried or wheeled	1,800	0	0
Leeds and Lowmoor Lock-out.			
To pay for the zeal of John Marshall in hunting up grievances, and the employment for twelve men and their increase . . .	36,192	11	6
The South Yorkshire Colliers.			
To a failing attempt to get 10 per cent. rise in wages	143,349	0	0

* *Strikes in the Manufacturing Districts*—a paper read at the Social Science meeting at Bradford, by Dr. John Watts.

	£.	s.	d.
The Durham Colliers.			
To the strike against 'big filling and rocking' of tubs	50,860	10	0
North Staffordshire Colliers and Ironstone Getters.			
To resistance to reduction, and demand for increase of 12½ per cent., payment on account . .	15,488	0	0
Northop Hall Colliers.			
To the gain of 12½ per cent. in wages . .	3,059	7	0
Newcastle Painters.			
To a lost strike for 12½ per cent. rise . .	3,212	0	0
South Staffordshire Colliers.			
To resistance to 7½ per cent. reduction, payment on account	52,746	13	0
Wolverhampton Bricklayers and Labourers.			
To a strike for 11 per cent. rise to the bricklayers' labourers, payment on account . .	5,270	5	0
Total . . .	£284,978	6	0

The society therefore lost, from causes immediately in view, in round numbers, 285,000*l.* in seven months, and these struggles involved 10,478 men and youths for an average of fifteen weeks. One-half of the sum mentioned would have been spent in wages, if the men had remained at work. Now, suppose it had been possible for the men to have continued at work—to have made the same sacrifices for economy which they made for strikes—then these 10,478 workmen would, in fifteen weeks, have accumulated a fund which, at 100*l.* per head, might have given permanent employment, at average wages, to 1,425 men; and, assuming profits to average 15 per cent., might have given them also 21,375*l.* per annum, in addition to their wages; or enough to add 214 men annually to the list of those who would thus have become their own employers. And this, we apprehend, is the proper way for working-men to view a strike. Ten thousand five hundred men, in fifteen weeks, voluntarily and recklessly threw away the independence of 1,425 men, simply because they were not pleased with their masters. The world, in its many phases of folly and ignorance, seldom exhibits so reckless and so lamentable a sacrifice as this!

CHAPTER IX.

THE COVENTRY STRIKE.

COVENTRY has attained a bad pre-eminence in connexion with trade disputes and strikes, and its turbulent, prejudiced, and audacious population have ever been the uncompromising enemies to all progress and improvement. Coventry opposed to the last hour all modification of the silk-duties, and has resisted with the utmost pertinacity the introduction of new and skilfully-constructed machinery. The first steam-factory in Coventry was burned down during a dispute about wages. The weavers affirmed that they had no connexion with the deed, yet the masters renewed the experiment with well-founded apprehension. Then there was an opposition to the employment of women at the looms, and one of the lightest and most easy processes in the manufacture, which might be managed by children, is engrossed by the men under heavy penalties. The ribbon-factory, however, opens its doors to women, though this was long resisted by their stronger companions.

Coventry, like most other seats of manufacturing industry, had its protective society, which was called the Ribbon-weavers' Protective Association, to which the operatives in the silk manufacture for the most part belonged.

The town was divided into districts for the purposes of this society, and a penny per week was collected from its members. The main object of the society was to protect 'the list,' or terms of payment fixed by agreement. Every infraction of the terms was brought before the committee, which took cognisance of all disputes between employer and employed, and sustained the men when legal expenses

were incurred. This society, through mismanagement, we believe, died a natural death, and the Factory Operatives' Protective Association occupied its place. There were two orders of operatives connected with the ribbon trade, the staple of Coventry's industry—those who wove ribbons at home, and were paid by the piece (36 yards); and those who worked in factories, and were paid weekly wages. The factory hands struck against piecework in the factories in 1854, at the bidding of their Association, and in 1858 they struck in favour of piecework *only*. Conduct so opposite was accounted for in this way. The Coventry men heard that the factory ribbon-weavers at Macclesfield and at Congleton, paid by a list, earned more than they did; and, stimulated by the society, the Coventry men demanded that all ribbon-weaving should be paid by the piece. This method of working would have abolished the entire benefit of machinery, as regards the manufacture, and have given the whole gain to the operative. If the employer had to pay so much per piece, whether the ribbon took a long or short time to produce, he could have no inducement to set up improved machinery, or use any expediting arts; and as it was mainly owing to those arts that the ribbon manufacture held its ground, the disuse of them was, in fact, a surrender of the competition. This being evident to the leading employers, they refused the demand of the operatives to be paid by the piece *only*, and, sooner than yield a point essential to the very existence of the trade, they 'locked out' their hands. The Chamber of Commerce offered to mediate between the parties, and some of the manufacturers were willing to share the benefits of the recent improvements with the factory hands. A few of the latter returned to work, but they were waylaid by the members of the association, and were not only insulted, but maltreated. A 'levy' was made of twopence in the shilling on the wages of all factory weavers, and a penny in the shilling on those of all other persons employed in the factories, where the wages then paid were from 40

to 50 per cent. higher than before the new mechanical improvements were adopted.

The opposition to the few steam-factory employers was, however, too strong, backed as it was by the less enterprising of their own body, and the point was conceded. From that time the employers lost the chief interest in their calling, and this was one of the disadvantages of which the men were warned in time. The men could not themselves institute improvements; but they had destroyed their employers' interest in doing it, and the consequences were inevitable.

The price-list agreed upon could not, of course, remain long unaltered, in regard to a manufacture which depends on fancy and fashion. In the spring, a principal firm proposed some changes, which were approved by the Silk Manufacturers' Association. The operatives' society, however, would permit no alteration in the smallest particular, and the firm necessarily recurred to the plan of weekly wages. Then ensued scenes of violence, which created surprise and alarm far beyond the limits of Coventry. The workpeople of the firm, who refused to turn out, were stoned and beaten, and no protection which the authorities could afford enabled them to go home after their work. If the inhabitants generally were disquieted, what must have been the thraldom of both society and non-society men, who had to pay for the tyranny which was destroying their livelihood, and the prospects of those who would have to succeed them! If some were ignorant, and misled, others—and those the vast majority—were not only discontented, but were pillaged and coerced.

CHAPTER X.

THE POTTERY STRIKES.

THE STRIKES in the pottery trade, in the years 1834 and 1836, also 'point a moral and adorn a tale,' of more than ordinary interest, in relation to working-men.

The Staffordshire Potteries, as the locality is ordinarily termed, comprise parts of three parishes, and extend, from north to south, a distance of eight miles. Four of the principal towns are included within this limit, of which Burslem is the oldest in the district; and the first in rank next to this town are Hanley and Shelton, which may be said to form one town, as they are immediately contiguous to each other, and are the most populous.

At the census of 1831, the population of the several towns within the parish of Stoke-upon-Trent was 35,602; in the parish of Burslem, 12,714; and in the township of Tunstall, in Wolstanton parish, 3,673—making a total of 51,989. Since that period the population has more than doubled.*

All the processes of the manufacture of pottery are performed by manual labour, and no machinery, in the common acceptation of the term, is used. Every branch in the trade is healthy, with the exception of that employed in covering the surface of the ware with glaze, or (as it is technically called) 'dipping.' The regular working-time, on which all calculations of wages are based, is fifty-four hours per week, or an average of nine hours per day; but when goods are in great demand, the workmen are often required

* *Journal of the Statistical Society*, vol. i.

to make greater exertions, and the time is extended to sixty-six hours per week, or an average of eleven hours per day.

The operative potters, as a body, earn fully as good, if not better, wages than the workmen of any other staple trade in the kingdom, and full employment is afforded at suitable occupations to women and children. In a statement published by the Chamber of Commerce previous to the general strike, and circulated throughout the kingdom, there are the following remarks on the subject of the earnings of the workmen, which have been authenticated by the proper authorities:—

Two or three years ago, when wages were considered low, the weekly average was from 17*s.* to 21*s.* for men, according to their skilfulness; 7*s.* to 9*s.* for women, and 3*s.* 6*d.* to 4*s.* 6*d.* for children of fourteen years old. The average earning in regular branches are now from 21*s.* to 28*s.* for men, 9*s.* to 12*s.* for women, and 4*s.* to 6*s.* for children—the labour being calculated at nine hours per day.

The operative potters, in their general character, are industrious and orderly, and possess the comforts of life to a considerable extent. For ten years previous to the strike, wages had been undergoing a progressive advance, caused in part by the operation of the Potters' Union, but more by an uninterrupted demand for goods, which left few skilful hands out of regular employment. At no period since the establishment of the trade was the remuneration for labour so ample as at the time of the general strike in 1836.

The first union of the workmen known in the Potteries, for the purpose of regulating prices, was established in 1824. In 1825 the hands at a number of manufactories struck for an advance of wages, but during the continuance of the strike the well-remembered commercial panic of that year occurred, which frustrated their endeavours, and work was resumed at the same or lower prices than those previously paid. One of the expedients of the union at that time was to commence manufacturing, and, by thus making the surplus hands a source of profit, it was thought a waste of

funds would be prevented, and at the same time the competition for employment would be checked.

The union was dissolved, and after its dissolution, those who had been at its head, or who had actively promoted it, were looked upon with great distrust by the masters, and were deemed dangerous characters, inasmuch as they would on all occasions be ready to excite a spirit of disaffection among their fellow-workmen, and take every opportunity of raising the price of labour. These leaders had, consequently, considerable difficulty in obtaining employment, and some therefore left the district, while others took to other occupations. One of the leaders of the union, however—a man of some mark in his way, who had subsequently changed his views on the subject—made the following observations, in a letter published just previous to the strike of 1836:—

> These simple facts will illustrate the nature of unions—their utter inefficacy—the factious spirit they cherish—the false principles on which they are founded—the materials of which they are ordinarily composed, and the ruinous effects to which they lead. We spent nearly 3,000*l.* to prop up a fallacious delusion! Labour fell lower than ever in 1826, in consequence of the depression of trade. Many of the men were ruined, and went in at any price. Many, before in comfort, dragged on a miserable existence on parish-pay, having offended their employers beyond forgiveness.

In the year 1830, however, two delegates from the general trades-union convened a public meeting, to be held in the open air, at a short distance from the Potteries. These individuals harangued in a strain of great violence; they denounced all the masters, with one exception, as oppressors of their workmen, and exhorted the potters to form part of a general union of the operative classes throughout the kingdom, which (according to their representation) would correct all that was amiss in the relations between master and man, and give to the latter his proper station in society. The result of this address was the formation of a Union of Potters, the effects of which were quickly felt by the small manufacturers, who were

paying a low rate of wages. In 1833 Mr. Owen, of New Lanark, visited the Potteries, and stimulated the union among the workmen. He took every means of advancing his principles, and some of the most active agents of the union were considered to be his followers.

In 1834 another attempt was made at manufacturing by the working-men. A manufactory was taken at Burslem, on a lease for a term of years, and seven of the men who had accumulated property entered into engagements for the payment of the rent. A capital, amounting to 800*l.*, was advanced from the general fund, and two of the most active members of the union had the management. This concern struggled through an existence of eighteen months; the capital was entirely lost, all parties became dissatisfied with each other, and those connected with the lease were happy at being discharged from their responsibilities on almost any terms.

At this time the demand for goods was very brisk, and the workmen were fully employed. It appeared to the masters, therefore, a favourable opportunity to respond to the feelings of the workmen, and to make an advance in the price of workmanship. It was thought that such a course would allay the irritation and discontent which generally prevailed towards a certain class of manufacturers. In the Potteries there has always been a great difference in the price paid to workmen for articles of the same description. Some manufacturers gave a greater and others a less degree of finish to their goods, according to their standing in home and foreign trades; and it often happens that the workmen at one manufactory earn better wages than those at another where the prices are higher. It was mutually agreed, between the masters and men, that a joint committee, consisting of an equal number of each body, should meet, and determine on a minimum list of workmanship. This committee entered on its duties, and proceeded to effect the object in view, but it was soon brought to a termination by what the masters deemed a violation of faith on the part of the men. The general body of one important branch of the trade refused to sanction the

'acts of their delegates; and when this was communicated to the committee, the masters would not proceed further in the business. In November 1834, the end of the potters' year, the workmen at ten manufactories in Burslem and Tunstall struck for an advance of wages. The advance demanded was an average of 35 per cent. upon the current rate. After the strike had continued for ten weeks, the manufacturers concerned in it convened a meeting of the general body of the manufacturers throughout the district, and submitted to their consideration the demands of the workmen, and asked advice as to the course to be pursued.

This meeting decided that an advance to a certain extent ought to be conceded, and appointed a committee of five manufacturers, not connected with the pending dispute, to arrange an equitable list of prices. This arrangement was made without the concurrence of the men; but as a majority of the members of the committee were among the most respectable in the trade, and known to pay the highest prices for workmanship, and as no complaints were heard from their workmen, it was thought that a list which had received such sanction would be acceptable to the men engaged in the strike. The result, however, proved different, and the men rejected the revised list, and insisted on their full demands. At the next meeting of the general body of the masters, the following resolution was passed:—

That the meeting feels disappointed that the list of working prices, as revised by this committee, and subsequently agreed to by the said manufacturers at Burslem and Tunstall, and by them offered to their workmen, has not been accepted by them, and been productive of an amicable settlement of their differences. That, in order to do away with every reasonable objection to the revised list of prices, and to bring about a permanent settlement of the matters in dispute, this meeting advise that the manufacturers concerned therein propose to the workmen at issue with them, that they select six operatives (not being interested parties) to be added to the present committee and Mr. Mayer, making six manufacturers and six workmen, which united committee shall look over the said list, and make whatever alterations they shall deem proper therein.

On this proposal being made to the workmen, the Board

of Management of the Potters' Union, to whom everything was referred, passed the following resolution:—

February 9, 1835.—At a meeting of the Board of Management for the Operative Potters' Society, it was unanimously resolved: The board, having duly considered the resolutions of the manufacturers' meeting, held at the Swan Inn, Hanley, on the 6th instant, find that, notwithstanding all its efforts to bring such a meeting to acknowledge a fair principle to legislate upon, it has hitherto failed in such efforts. Such being the case, our present conviction is, that it is neither our duty nor privilege to hold any further conference with them on the subject; and at the same time are perfectly satisfied that the prices required by the workmen are just and reasonable, and such as the circumstances of the manufacturers and the country at large will admit.

The whole ground of dispute remained in the same state as at the commencement of the strike, nor were the parties interested, to all appearance, any nearer a settlement. No further attempts at compromise were made; but on the 1st of March, after a stoppage of fifteen weeks, the manufactories were opened, and the masters yielded to the demands of the men. The number of hands employed by the ten manufacturers was at least 3,300, and the weekly amount of wages exceeded 1,900*l.* The total loss, in wages alone, sustained by the workmen was estimated at 27,000*l.* To this amount must be added the loss sustained by the masters on their dormant capital, the loss to the working colliers, and to the other branches immediately dependent upon the potters.

The workmen engaged in this contest did not, however, receive that pecuniary aid from their brethren which they had expected, and which, according to their view of the contest, they had a right to expect. In the financial report of the Potters' Union for 1836, the amount charged under the head of 'assistance to the Burslem and Tunstall workmen' is only 1,562*l.*; and if it be estimated that 300*l.* was collected from the publicans and shopkeepers in support of the cause, there still remains a loss to the workmen of 25,138*l.* The workmen effected the object for which they struck, but the masters appeared to be quite power-

less. The immediate benefit to the men was very great; it extended from 30 to 35 per cent. upon the weekly amount of wages for the same quantity of manufactured goods. And if it be estimated that this advantage continued until the partial strike of September 1836, a period of eighteen months, it would appear that the pecuniary benefit to the workmen at the ten manufactories would be 41,500*l.*, at the lowest rate of calculation; and even after the loss sustained by the workmen in effecting the advance is deducted, there still appears a balance of 26,362*l.* in their favour. It must not, however, be thought that even half of this amount was paid to the workmen in addition to the weekly wages they had previously received. Besides, the intemperate workmen had so much more time at their command to devote to dissipation. The indolent were better able to indulge their habits without diminishing their earnings; and, as it was one of the professed objects of the union to lessen the number of working hours, the best members were expected to show an example in this respect.

The workmen were naturally elated at the victory which they had achieved, and had the weakness to delude themselves with the idea that nothing could stand against their combined will. The leaders of the union assumed to decide and regulate all matters that related to the workmen and their employers. Whenever an advance was deemed necessary, it was demanded, and a few days—nay, in some instances, a few hours—were given to the masters to acquiesce or to refuse. If the workmen at certain manufactories did not subscribe to the funds to the full extent required, certain indispensable hands were ordered to strike until the refractory members yielded obedience. In some instances where workmen were dismissed for violations of duty, the rest struck until the others were restored to their places. It frequently happened that a master was not allowed to increase the number of his hands in a certain department, on the ground that his workmen did not think an addition was required. A new form of agreement, drawn up under the sanction of the union, was dictated to the masters; the

hours of labour were to be diminished, and the number of apprentices, as well as the conditions on which they were to be taken, was regulated by the same authority.

The masters found it impossible to comply with these demands, and submit to the course of conduct pursued, without appearing to abandon the general interests of the trade; therefore, in March 1836, the great body of the manufacturers formed themselves into a society, under the designation of a 'Chamber of Commerce,' the professed object of which was to protect the general interests of the trade, but virtually to counteract the effect of the proceedings of the workmen. The chamber issued an address, in which it avowed that it would be suicidal to remain inactive, and by that means indirectly encourage the proceedings of the union, which had destroyed the legitimate control of the masters over their business, and exposed them to constant and increasing annoyance. In order, however, to understand the bearings of the strike, it is necessary that a peculiarity in the potter's trade should be explained. It had been usual, from the first establishment of the trade, for the workmen to be hired from Martinmas to Martinmas, and when any change was made in prices, or in the conditions of work, it was always made on these occasions. The chamber, therefore, found it difficult to effect any material change in the then existing state of things, until the period arrived when engagements had to be renewed for the following year.

It had, however, clearly appeared that, notwithstanding an agreement to the contrary, the workmen were enabled to effect their object, by causing the hands at any manufactory to strike until their demands were conceded. To counteract this, no other plan presented itself to the chamber than that of inserting a clause in the agreement, whereby the masters, as a body, might be enabled to suspend their manufactories whenever the workmen of any master struck, in violation of any existing contract. Such a clause was drawn up, under the sanction of high legal authority, and the masters determined on its forming part of their agreement. The contest on the part of the

masters was limited to these objects—to maintain the established wages of the trade, to continue the mode of hiring from year to year, and to make an alteration in the form by adding the protective clause named. The workmen made an effort to alter the system of annual hiring, and to substitute an agreement terminable at a month's notice. They strongly objected to the protective clause of the masters, and determined to abolish one of the most important regulations of the trade—that of working 'good from the oven.' Let us explain this mode of work. Two branches of the pottery trade, viz., *flat and hollow ware pressers*, are only paid for the work which comes in a perfect state out of the biscuit-oven; and it is assumed that whatever is imperfect, whether from accidental breakage or bad workmanship, is of no value, and is consequently broken. This custom had prevailed for upwards of thirty years, and when it was first commenced, an increased price was paid to the workmen, in consideration of the risk incurred by the work undergoing this process. It was urged by the masters, in defence of this usage, that it afforded the only feasible check upon the unskilfulness of their workmen; that the loss of the good workman is inconsiderable, and only falls heavily upon the negligent or inferior workman; while, under any circumstances, the loss to the master is the greatest, inasmuch as he loses the material and the firing from no fault of his own; while the workman, by whose unskilfulness the loss is occasioned, only loses the price of his labour. The Potters' Union represented the many abuses that had grown up under the mode of working 'good from the oven,' and their objections were in part admitted by the masters; but, previous to the termination of the strike, the system was divested of whatever was objectionable, as far as that could be done with security to the interests of the trade at large.

'A certain period of time,' says the narrative to which we are mainly indebted for the facts and details of the potters' strike,* 'is always allowed between the termination

* *An Account of Strikes in the Potteries, in the Years* 1834 *and* 1836: by John Boyle, Esq.

of an existing engagement and its renewal. This regulation is mutually advantageous; it enables changes to be made, either by masters or workmen, without inconvenience to the one, or loss of time to the other. The chamber fixed the 5th of September as the period when engagements were to be entered into for the following year, which would commence on the 11th November, or Martinmas. The masters expressed their readiness to proceed to the annual hiring, based on the new form of agreement, but those terms were universally rejected. The workmen thought, however, that if the old mode of enforcing their demands were then adopted, the same result would follow; and the hands at fourteen manufactories struck work, although they were under agreement to the end of the year. The Chamber of Commerce took the case of these fourteen manufacturers into their consideration, and urged them to oppose the proceedings of their workmen. Pecuniary recompense was promised, on a scale proportionate to the relative extent of their business, until Martinmas, the time when the suspension of the whole body would offer a more formidable resistance. The workmen, week after week, deceived themselves with the hope that the masters would not continue united; that certain individuals, among those whose men had struck, would soon yield, rather than sacrifice their connections; and that the secession of one would be the signal for the surrender of all the others. No change was made in this state of things until Martinmas, when sixty-four manufacturers, members of the chamber, suspended business, as they had previously resolved. Certain masters, in considerable extent of business, yielded rather than make the sacrifice of suspension, but those who held together proved sufficient to make an effectual resistance.'

The number of hands employed at the fourteen manufactories which struck in September was 3,500, and the weekly payment of wages was, at an average, 2,560*l.* The total loss to the district on this strike may be estimated at 31,168*l.* The number of hands employed at the sixty-four manufactories engaged in the general strike

was 15,660, and the amount of wages was, at an average, 11,238*l.* per week. The loss to the whole district on this strike may be estimated at 157,442*l.* There are in the Potteries 130 manufactories, which employ 20,000 hands, and pay in weekly wages 14,400*l.* It would thus appear that about half the total number of manufacturers were engaged in the strike; but as they were the greatest in extent of business, they employed seven-ninths of the total number of hands, and paid four-fifths of the whole amount of wages.

The union was completely defeated, not having succeeded in any one of its points. On the 20th of January, 1837, twenty-one weeks from the commencement of the strike with the fourteen manufactories, and ten weeks from the general suspension, the men resumed work. The annual hiring was retained; the suspension clause formed part of the agreement, and the 'good from the oven' system was continued. The extent of suffering was great, and far beyond anything that had previously been seen in the district. The payments from the union funds were very irregular, and did not exceed an average of 5*s.* or 6*s.* per week for men with families; while women and children, who form a large proportion of the working population, did not receive any allowance. Every form of appeal was made to the operative classes throughout the whole of the United Kingdom, and the extent to which assistance was afforded may be gathered from the fact, that there was owing to the trades-unions of other towns, the sum of 3,275*l.*, and of this amount there was due to Sheffield alone, 2,084*l.*

The privations of the workmen were great, but they bore it with a constancy worthy of a better cause. A few days before the termination of the strike, and at the very period when a great body of the workmen had entered into engagements with the masters, and thus virtually abandoned the union, a considerable number of individuals, amounting to upwards of 200, simultaneously pledged their watches and disposable articles of dress, in aid of the general funds. Many of the more provident

workmen, who had money in the savings-banks of the district, drew it out, either for the supply of their own necessities, or to assist the union. Several friendly societies, whose members were connected with the strike, advanced on loan the whole or a great portion of their accumulated funds. In many instances the workmen, who had been enabled from their savings to build or purchase cottages for themselves, surrendered their deeds in security for the advances of distant unions. The amount due by the potters to members of their own body for loans advanced, or claims withheld, was 2,563*l.*; and when to this was added the sum of 3,275*l.*, owing to distant unions, the total amount of debts to be discharged was 5,838*l.* According to a financial statement, the total loss inflicted by the strike, from first to last, was as follows:—

Total loss to the operative potters . . .	£152,816
„ colliers, crate-makers, and engravers .	19,332
„ the manufacturers . . .	16,462
Total . . .	£188,610

No outrage was committed, during the strike, either on the person or property of any manufacturer. There were no tumultuous gatherings, nor indications of violence, which was highly creditable to the men. During the strike, however, many of the manufacturers were 'picketed,' and any individual seen to enter the manufactories incurred a fine, which was stopped from the succeeding week's allowance. Such a regulation might be necessary in support of a bad cause, but could scarcely be required in one founded upon justice; and it was surprising that men who, from their conduct, appeared to understand so well their rights, and who were so sensitive under what was deemed oppression, should submit thus to be controlled in the operation of their own freewill and perfect liberty of action.

CHAPTER XI.

THE AMALGAMATED ENGINEERS' STRIKE.

THE Amalgamated Engineers' Strike of 1851–2 was in most respects, like other strikes, intolerant and injudicious. It was a foolish attempt to organise labour upon principles which have hitherto proved fallacious, and which, on their application, have uniformly resulted in destroying that which they assume to protect and uphold. The Amalgamated Society comprised, and no doubt comprises, a numerous and highly respectable body of men—engineers, mechanics, millwrights, &c., who are amongst the best-paid workmen of the country.

When we say intelligent, we mean as regards their capacity for work, and their relative superiority to any similar class of men, either in Europe or in America. But as regards the principles which should regulate their labour, and indeed all labour (for the laws of political economy admit of universal application), the Amalgamated Engineers do not appear to have a very clear and just perception. Their revised rules of 1857, which we believe are in existence to this day, indirectly furnish us with an illustration of what we mean. The preamble to the rules does not allude, in the slightest degrée, to any regulation of trade. It is worded as though the association were simply a benefit club, or a friendly society; but as we travel on, we find an ominous sentence or so, which at once throws a steady light upon the purport and intent of the body. For instance, we have a sentence of this kind—'Restrictions against the admission into our trade of those who have not earned a right by a probationary servitude'—restrictions which the council or committee feel themselves compelled

to impose; and look upon these 'vested interests,' as they term them, as analogous to those of 'the physician who holds a diploma, or the author who is protected by a copyright.' So the right of an amalgamated engineer to drive his fellow-workman out of the labour-market is as clearly established by law as that of a physician to his diploma, or an author to his copyright!

The executive council must consist of twenty-five members, appointed by as many branches or districts, nine of which are in or near London. In the country, two or more branches appoint a councilman in turn, and every councilman must have been five years in the society. The ordinary business is transacted by a council of nine London members, five forming a quorum, it remaining with the metropolitan body to summon the provincial councilmen in case of urgent necessity. The powers of the council are very great, but they are anything but clearly defined. One of the rules says, 'They shall determine anything wherein the society's rules are silent.' Here is a wide scope for the exercise of discretionary power. An instance or so, however, of this delegated authority will best explain what the society means. If a candidate for membership wants to know how the society fixes the rate of wages, he is informed that it is done by an 'understanding on the subject.' As to further enquiry touching the rule which bears upon the question, the candidate is informed that there is no rule of that nature, and that 'the council settles those matters on which the rules are silent.' But the question arises—How is a member to clear himself if charged with working too many hours, or for too low wages, if there is no rule to judge by? The council summarily settles this matter, and fines or expels the member as, in its wisdom, it thinks fit.

As regards wages and the hours of labour, the council says that the wages in 'a certain kind of work shall be not less than 35*s.* per week.' If a man takes less he must have leave to do so. Every member is registered, with his qualities as a workman; and it remains with the council whether any individual shall work for less than the

proclaimed rate. The relative merit of workmanship, or individual skill, have nothing to do with the question; these elevated qualities must be lowered to suit the comparatively weak and unskilful, and no man shall presume to raise himself above mediocrity. When the wages are 35*s.* in London, they are probably 24*s.* in Glasgow; and the Glasgow member may take work for 24*s.* with leave of the council, but not without. The same variations occur in the case of hours, occupations not being equally regular nor equally laborious. The professed time is 58½ hours per week; but some men are permitted to work half the night in addition, and some the whole night, if permission of the council be given. 'It is easily seen,' says a highly intelligent writer, from whom we have mainly borrowed these details,* 'how the members are thus caged in glass-cases in the society's collection—every individual known, registered, watched, and superintended, so that there is no escape from the guardianship. It is very like the case of Maryland or Washington negroes let out on hire, or Russian serfs on the *obrok* system. The difference is, that the Englishmen voluntarily put their necks into the yoke. They are under orders, it will be seen, in all the daily business of their lives. They work or are idle; they earn or are destitute; they go out or come in; they obey or disobey their employers; they prosper or suffer, according to order. While thus dragooned, it is a pity they do not consider the use the council puts them to, for the benefit of the society. While sound and hearty, and making good wages, they will always be abundantly taxed in their branch. The central council avoids the responsibility of taking care of the funds. It simply draws on the branches for what it wants—to pay expenses, salaries to itself, grants to strikes against machinery, and what not. Swindon sends 500*l.*, if asked; Crewe may send 1,000*l.*; Glasgow 500*l.*, and so on. If the central council ask for it, the branch must send it. At the end of the financial year the affairs are settled by equalisation. The funds in hand and the members are compared, and the amount per

* *Edinburgh Review*, No. ccxxiv.

head ascertained; and each branch is then instructed how much to pay to others, to equalise the funds of the whole. If there is anything more despotic than this in the broadest Socialism denounced on the Continent, we have never heard of it.'

This is not a limitation of the despotism practised by the society against the men—far from it. Worn-out labourers are easily disposed of, and no person can be admitted a member who belongs to another society. Any efficient member entering another society is excluded, with the forfeiture of all his contributions. No person defective in limb or sense, or subject to fits, is eligible for membership, except in the case of one-eyed men under thirty, whose remaining eye is good; but at the other end of the scale, we find that aged members, chargeable as pensioners, may earn half the established rate of wages at any employment whatever, each choosing between such earnings and his pension of seven shillings a week. It follows from this, that while the great branches of industry connected with engineering are engrossed by a society for the limitation of labour, and the enhancement of its price, the inefficient members of that society are left to swell the ranks of labourers in other callings, and thus proportionately depress the market-price of labour.

As regards the fines imposed upon individual members by the society, these are classified by the writer we have just quoted in a very succinct manner:—

Returning (he says) to the lot of the individual member—he is fined for omitting to inform the secretary, before the next branch-meeting night, of his having changed his residence or shop, or of his having got married; and he cannot obtain funeral-money for his wife till he has proved his marriage. Though rather doleful in a wedding season, this last warning is reasonable. The next is very severe. He is fined five shillings if he omits to inform the secretary, within twenty-four hours, of any vacancy he may know of, or of his receiving notice, or having any intention to leave his employment. There is a fine of half-a-crown for 'divulging anything relating to the society's business, except to a member.' Fines of half-a-crown, five shillings, and ten shillings are allotted to the first, second, and third offence of

'boasting of his independence towards his employer or employers, on account of being a member of the society.' Several other provisions relating to misconduct show that every man is living under a spy-system from the hour when he becomes a member, and a victim of this despotic organisation. We have seen that it is a secret society, conducted by an irresponsible authority. If it is irresponsible in the matter of trade regulation and of funds, so it is in relation to the infliction of punishment. By the thirty-third rule, 'any member charged with disorderly conduct' (in the absence of any definition of disorderliness), 'while on donation, shall be summoned before the branch or committee, and, if found guilty, be liable to such penalties as the nature of the case demands.' In the list of fines some specifications are very remarkable; as,—

	s.	d.
Topics not consonant with business, to be fined	1	0
Members vindicating the conduct of members who have been fined	2	6
Members censuring another	1	0
Members upbraiding for receiving the benefits	2	6
Members divulging society's business	2	6
Members finding fault, and not reporting	1	0
Members boasting of their independence	2	6
Second time	5	0
Third time	10	0
Any officer or member sending a false apology for not attending any of the society's meetings	2	6

Such is the organisation of the society; and such, also, is the ignorant bondage in which the majority of its members are kept!

The immediate cause of the strike was the desire, on the part of the men, to abolish overtime and piecework. The executive council of the society issued two circulars on the subject, one addressed to the men, and the other to the masters. The circulars stated that:—

After consulting every member of the Amalgamated Societies, they have come to the resolution of abolishing overtime and piecework, as evils of the greatest magnitude and the worst character. In consequence of the practice, men are found exhausting their own strength, injuring their own health, giving up all opportunities of improvement, and barring themselves out from the comforts of home and the pleasures of society, so that at the week's end they may add a few more shillings to their wages, and all the while others are begging for the leave to earn

their bread by their labour. The council believe, however, that this is, in most instances, done thoughtlessly, and that those who know its effects only submit to it under compulsion. By taking it up as a trade question, however, there will be no fear of the men doing wrong. The Amalgamated Trades are strong enough to meet any storm of opposition which may arise, and to support those who are faithful to their order.

Looked at as a common matter of everyday interest, those who think (and all are beginning to think now) will see the impolicy of overtime and piecework as a mere matter of wrong. What if a man who makes himself a slave does earn this week a few shillings more than he who moderately enjoys life and the fruits of his labours?—he wears out sooner. The bow always bent soon loses its spring, and the overworked toiler, probably in the prime of manhood, becomes a decrepid invalid, a burden to his family and his trade, and a misery to himself; while his wiser fellows live to a hale old age of labour.

There is more than this, however, to be thought of, according to the missive of the council, for, instead of the present apparent gain being really a gain, it is generally an actual loss. 'You know,' they say, 'fully as well as we do, that the effects of habitual over-exertion, besides degrading the body, deteriorate the mind; and if large gains are made, habits of reckless intemperance are too often engendered, which squander more than the gains. In addition to that, overtime and piecework, as the means of reducing wages, are greatly assisted by the mental slavishness the system produces.'

Employers and the world at large have, according to the views expressed in the circular, their own notions of what working-men ought to be allowed to earn. That estimate is not generally a very exorbitant one, but it is founded upon the notion of a day's labour of moderate duration. Some men are tempted on by the greater pay for overtime, or the increased opportunities of piecework, to earn much more than a man can earn, at the present price of labour, if he be regardful of his own health. The employers then turn round upon those who had made their wages high, and quote those high wages as the price of labour. If the men complain—if public opinion is evoked—the overtime

and piecework masters say confidently to the public, who only see the surface of questions (so at least says the circular), 'We are somewhat lowering wages, it is true, at the present moment, but our prices of labour are far above the average of former years. Look at our books, and see that for weeks past these men have been earning very high wages.' If the attempt succeed, the council state, the pieceworkers are put upon day-wages; their capability for work is estimated by their forced and feverish efforts under a bad system; and the prices of piecework are reduced, so as to make their increased toil yield them about the ordinary rate of wages.

Another effect of piecework and overtime, according to the views of the council, is that it causes redundancy of labour. There is, perhaps, never too much for all the hands there are to do it—generally too little; and if men work overtime, or increase production by piecework, they also increase the disproportion between the labour there is to be done and the number of hands to do it. Those hands, thrown unemployed upon the labour-market, become at once the competitors of the men in work, and a burden on the funds of the society to which they belong. They, at the same time, draw upon the resources of the workers, and enable the employer, by pitting one class against the other, to diminish those resources; and thus a universal game of 'beggar my neighbour' is set up, and the broken of to-day become the breakers of to-morrow. Feeling strongly the evils generated by this system, and fortified by the universal answer of the society in favour of its abolition, the executive council came to the following resolutions :—

First.—That all engineers, machinists, millwrights, smiths, and pattern-makers cease to work piece and systematic overtime after the 31st December 1851.

Second.—That in all cases of breakdowns or accidents, where members of the trade are called upon to work overtime, they be paid double time for all such time worked.

Third.—That all time worked after half-past five or six o'clock in the evening, and before six o'clock in the morning, be consi-

dered overtime, excepting Saturday, when overtime commences from the termination of the usual day.

The employers met these resolutions by forming a central union in London, to protect their interests by resisting the demands of the men. Thirty-six firms in the northern districts discharged their hands, who numbered 10,350. All these firms joined the central union, and the contest between employers and employed on that occasion was characterised by more than ordinary bitterness of feeling on the one hand, and of deep resentment on the other.

The names of the firms alluded to, and the number of hands they respectively discharged, were as follows:—

Firms.	Hands Discharged.
Sharp, Brothers, & Co., Manchester	664
W. Fairbairn & Sons, Manchester	704
Parr, Curtis, & Madeley, Manchester	580
J. Hetherington & Co., Manchester	180
Dobson & Barlow, Manchester	986
E. S. Bellhouse, Manchester	128
John M. Dunlop, Manchester	50
J. Whitworth & Co., Manchester	277
John Ellis & Co., Manchester	220
Peel, Williams, & Peel, Manchester	100
Wm. Higgins & Sons, Salford	652
Hibbert, Platt, & Sons, Oldham	1,636
Saville & Wolstenholm, Oldham	252
Lees & Barnes, Oldham	400
Benj. Hick & Sons, Bolton	502
Musgrave & Son, Bolton	350
Knight & Wood, Bolton	142
Robert Daglish, jun., St. Helens	110
Executors of Chas. Hardman, Bolton	62
Jackson & Brothers, Bolton	110
Richard Threlfal, Bolton	200
Rothwell & Co., Bolton	250
Thomas Marsden, Salford	51
F. Lewis & Son, Salford	100
B. Goodfellow, Salford	143
W. Collier & Co., Salford	100
W. & C. Mather, Salford	125
P. Rothwell & Co., Salford	not known
W. J. & J. Garforth, Dakinfield	140
Wm. & Joseph Cole, Dakinfield	60
James Nasmyth & Co., Patricroft	300
E. Leach & Sons, Rochdale	144
John Mayson, Rochdale	272
Lord & Brothers, Todmorden	90
Hobert, Gordon, & Co., Stockport	270
Tayleure & Co., Warrington	not known
Total	10,350

On January 30, 1852, the masters issued their manifesto, or *ukase*, as the workmen whimsically designated it, in which the following conditions were laid down:—

1. That no member of this association shall engage, admit into,

or (after he shall have become cognisant of the same) continue in his service or employment, in any capacity whatever, any member of any trades-union or trades society which takes cognisance of, professes to control, or practises interference with, the regulations of any establishment, the hours or terms of labour, the contracts or agreements of employers or employed, or the qualification or terms of service.

2. That no deputations of workmen, of trades-unions, committees, or other bodies, with reference to any objects referred to in Article 1, be received by any member of this association on any account whatever; but that any person forming part of, instigating, or causing such deputation, shall be dismissed forthwith; it being still perfectly open to any workman, individually, to apply on such subject to his employer, who is recommended to be at all times open and accessible to any personal representation of his individual operatives.

3. That employers be especially solicited, as much as possible, to avoid the delegation of the engagement or contract of their workmen to others, and to take a more personal superintendence and control of engagements with their hands; and, in the most especial manner, that they impress upon every person engaged by them their anxiety that, in case of any molestation, annoyance, or obstruction in pursuing their avocations, or procuring employment, they should at once apply and complain to the principals of the establishment, who should sift such complaint to the bottom, and to dismiss all persons who had been proved to have offered or abetted such molestation or obstruction.

4. That no member of this association shall engage, or continue in his employment, any person whatsoever, until he has read, in presence of one witness at least, to such person the rules, if any, of his establishment, and also the following—

'Declaration, by the undersigned, on engaging in the employment of . . . . . I, *A B*, do hereby honestly, and in its simplest sense and plainest meaning, declare that I am neither now, nor will, while in your employment, become a member or contributor, or otherwise belong to or support, any trades-union rules, or society, which, directly or indirectly, by its rules, or in its meetings or transactions of its business, or by means of its officers or funds, takes cognisance of, or professes to control or interfere with, the arrangements or regulations of this or any other manufacturing or trading establishment, the hours or terms of labour, the contracts or agreements of employers or employed, or the qualifications or period of service. I do also

further declare, that I have no purpose or intention to call in question the right of any man to follow any honest calling in which he may desire to engage, or of any master to make what arrangements and engage what workmen he pleases, upon whatever terms they choose mutually to agree.

(Signed)

5. That no member of this association shall engage any workman who has been previously in employment elsewhere, without ascertaining from what establishment he was discharged, and whether the cause of his leaving had any reference to an infringement of the objects of the foregoing declaration.

6. That no member of this association shall, on any pretext whatever, permit or submit to dictation, interference, or direct or indirect tampering, with the management of his establishment, or the engagement or conditions of the service of his workmen; but that whenever any attempts are made to abrogate or compromise the free operation of the foregoing provisions, such member shall at once apply, if he requires it, for the advice, award, and assistance of the executive committee, who shall be bound to afford him every assistance and support called for by the circumstances of the particular case.

7. That in the event of a strike or turn-out occurring in the establishment of any member of this association, for reasons and from causes which shall, in the opinion of the executive committee, entitle the employers so assailed to its countenance and support, it is hereby and shall continue to be distinctly understood, that all members of the association shall sustain, according to their power and ability, such member in upholding the objects of the association; it being expressly understood and declared, that no acts shall warrant the interference of this committee, except such as it is the declared object of the foregoing provisions to prevent.

8. That in order, as far as possible lies in the power of this association, to obviate any inconvenience which may arise to meritorious workmen, in being deprived of any advantages they may fancy they derive from the legitimate objects from which existing trades-unions or societies have been diverted, this association gives full power and authority to the executive committee to submit for its sanction a plan for the establishment of a new, sound, and legitimate benefit society.

After a protracted struggle between the amalgamated engineers and their employers, in which a good deal of

illwill was generated, the dispute virtually terminated in the unconditional submission of the men to the terms required from them; and the executive council of the Amalgamated Society lowered their magniloquent tone, and issued a submissive 'ukase,' which contained the following significant resolutions:—

1. That, in consequence of the present position of our affairs in relation to the dispute, this meeting is of opinion that those of our members who may be compelled to sign the 'Declaration' should not be excluded.

2. That the general executive council recommend the necessity of making a levy of half a day's wages on all the members in work, for the purpose of supporting those out of employment in consequence of the present dispute.

3. That any member neglecting to pay the levy of half a day's pay, the same shall be placed to his arrears of contributions, subject to the approval of the next delegate meeting.

4. That the non-society men receive their fair share of support, the same as formerly.

5. That, in the opinion of this meeting, hostile resistance of labour against capital is not calculated to enhance the condition of the labourer. We therefore advise that all our future operations should be directed in promoting the system of self-employment in associative workshops, as the best means of effectually regulating the conditions of labour.

In publishing the foregoing resolutions, the executive council frankly and unhesitatingly made the avowal, that in the contest between capital and labour, the latter was defeated. But we will give the comments of the council on the disastrous results of the strike in the *ipsissima verba* of that body itself. 'Whatever hopes,' they said, 'were entertained that the worker might successfully assert his rights, by an open and avowed resistance to a tyranny of the most despotic kind, they have faded before the immense power of wealth, and the determination of its possessors to be absolute and unconditional masters. However we might have relied upon the truth of our cause, and the justice of the effort to elevate the industrial position of the artisan, to have conciliated and convinced our adversaries, and to secure us extended support, we

have found, by bitter and dear-bought experience, that mere right—right unsupported by strength—truth discarded from power—may be beaten down and trampled upon by rich strong-handed wrong. Nothing that we could do has been left undone. No effort that it was in our power to make has been spared. We have invited discussion and criticism—we have challenged controversy—we have fearlessly laid bare before the world our motives and our purposes—we have invited the verdict of public opinion—we have offered to submit to arbitration—we have endeavoured to rouse the trades of England (those who are as much interested in the result of our struggle as ourselves) to united action—and at last we have offered concessions as great as could honourably be made, and withdrawn our circular of December 1851, but all without avail. Help we have had, but not to a sufficient extent to enable us to continue the battle; sympathy has been awarded to us, but our opponents, great in the world of wealth, were enabled to command the most influential portion of the press; hope that we should triumph has made thousands of hearts beat high, but they belonged to those whose voices are not heard in the world—the workers of the country—and they were comparatively powerless. Through all the history of the strike we have nothing to reproach ourselves with—nothing to regret, but the want of success. In the last extremity, when we had given up all that could be conceded, the Employers' Association still maintaining their determination to suffer no man to work unless he would admit his own slavery and degradation by signing their infamous "Declaration," it became necessary to take some steps to avert the crisis. We must submit to inevitable necessity. The poor man, without funds to fall back upon, is dependent upon labour for life In the midst of all the wealth he has created for others, hi. only right is to toil, when he can get leave, for a bare subsistence: he is an infant in the grasp of a giant, to whom he must perforce submit. We cannot ask any man to become a pauper or starve. We cannot say to the artisan, "Let your wives grow haggard, and your children pale and

thin and ragged, and your hearths cold, till misery past endurance forces you into the poorhouse, where social affections are violated by the law which attaches degradation to relief." We cannot command absolute self-sacrifice. Between two evils we are compelled to choose the least. The proposals contained in the above resolutions, if they are adopted (as we doubt not they will be), will place those members who continue in the society, after having signed the "Declaration," in a position not to violate a moral truth, however reluctant they may feel to submit to such an act of tyranny; and in the prospect of this change, we say that we will not exclude any member who now signs the employers' "Declaration" from obtaining bread for himself and his family.'

CHAPTER XII.

THE YORKSHIRE STRIKES.

THE Yorkshire strikes, as they are commonly denominated, furnish a curious and instructive chapter in the history of the manufacturing classes. On the repeal of the Combination Laws, in 1824, the workmen employed in the woollen-cloth trade endeavoured to establish a union, but failed. In 1831, however, the spirit of combination revived, and the stubbers, spinners, and weavers in the cloth trade formed a union. The Messrs. Gott, one of the leading manufacturing firms at Leeds, were the first to feel the effect of the combination. The firm at that time had just completed a building, upon a gigantic scale, intended for the weaving of fine woollen-cloth ; all the expensive machinery adapted for that purpose had been purchased and erected, and every necessary arrangement for commencing the business had been made, when the weavers, to the number of 210, turned out. The men declared that they were paid lower wages than were given by other Leeds manufacturers, which was not the fact, as the wages given in the Messrs. Gott's establishment were not exceeded by any other in the town, and averaged 17*s.* weekly. For some weeks the required advance of wages was resisted, till, at length, those men who continued at their work were subjected to such treatment, on entering and leaving the factory, that the proprietors, receiving no support or countenance from other manufacturers, were induced to accede to the terms proposed. The men, however, were disappointed in obtaining all the advantages they looked for, as the Messrs. Gott determined only to take back sufficient weavers to work the looms in the old part of the establishment,

leaving their newly-erected building unused. They soon after disposed of all the machinery it contained, and this commodious and spacious structure, 136 yards in length, stood untenanted for some time—a melancholy monument of the effect of union policy and wisdom.

The union men, however, thought otherwise, and deemed the emptiness of the Messrs Gott's unrivalled structure a triumph of their cause—a feather in their cap The men engaged in the various processes of finishing, as well as milling or fulling, woollen cloth joined the union, and the workmen, for a period, wielded almost irresistible power over the property of their masters. The next step of the union was to draw up a list of wages to be paid for spinning, weaving, &c., which was published in the newspapers of the day, and also on sheets of paper, for the purpose of being transmitted to the millowners and small manufacturers. This document assumed the air of a proclamation, and was headed—'*A Scale of Prices to be observed by Millowners, Manufacturers, &c.*,' and had appended to it some regulations as to the admission of boys, and the proportion in which they were to be employed relatively to the number of adults. The workmen were then ordered by the committee of the union to demand of their respective employers compliance with this scale of wages, care being taken that the manufacturers should be successively applied to for this purpose, in order that there might be less chance of any general resistance on their part, and that the combination might not have too many on its hands at the same time. The larger portion of the masters acceded to these demands, and their names were duly published in the Leeds newspapers.

The workmen, however, with a logic peculiarly their own, contended that this scale was not a rise of wages, but only what they termed an 'equalisation' of them, it being a principal object of their union to compel the masters to pay every operative, good, bad, or indifferent, an equal sum for his labour. But the workmen failed to gain the expected advantage from this advance of wages, as the

masters were prevented, by the state of the market, from making beyond a certain quantity of cloth, and that only of the superior qualities, while paying the advanced rate of wages: they, consequently, either sent their yarn to be woven in the neighbouring villages, where wages were always lower than at Leeds, or stopped part of their works entirely; and thus a great many of the men were thrown permanently out of employ, who of course had to be supported by those who got work.

Trade, both home and foreign, was materially injured by these contests. Some of the manufacturers managed to escape the losses they would otherwise have sustained, by making alterations in spinning the yarns and setting the webs, by which latter phrase is understood the fixing of the geer or reed in which the cloth is woven, and which varies from 36 to 110 portions of 38 threads each. By the alterations made, the manufacturer got the same quantity of yarn converted into cloth of the same nominal quality as before, and for the same cost per yard. For instance, if he had been paying, previous to the promulgation of the scale, 2*s.* for an 80-geer, and the scale fixed 2*s.* 3*d.* as the price of weaving per string, he would weave the same quantity of wool in a 76-geer, at 2*s.*, making such alterations in the spinning of the yarn as were requisite. The union made new regulations to meet this contrivance, which were counteracted by fresh evasions on the part of the manufacturer; and thus a war of cunning and contrivance was carried on between masters and men, in which the latter were sometimes beaten, and in some instances they voluntarily requested their employers to return to their old system and prices. The evil of these proceedings was, that the goodness of the cloth was impaired by the alteration of the geer and spinning; and the public had to pay in the deteriorated quality of the cloth they purchased, while our foreign trade was doubtless injured by these futile and absurd attempts of the workmen to raise their wages beyond the natural level.

The union, however, was nothing daunted by these drawbacks. It commenced a system of interference in the

management of the manufacturers' business, by requiring them, in case of a contraction of their scale of production, not to discharge any of their workmen, but to keep every loom and jenny going—dealing out the work, however small might be its quantity, in equal proportions to their men. This demand being partially complied with, the masters were next desired not to stop a single one of the machines used in the process preparatory to spinning, though, from the falling-off of their orders, it should not be necessary to keep them at work. This useless subdivision of the work to be done would have seriously damaged the cloth, besides inflicting a great loss on the manufacturer, by compelling him, in some cases, to keep two steam-engines going when one would be sufficient. This demand was, in consequence, vigorously resisted, and the workmen, probably finding that it was not likely to benefit themselves, withdrew the unreasonable claim.

The tyranny of the union at length knew no bounds; and the committee, like all ignorant men in the possession of authority, for which they are totally unfit from sheer incapacity, ran riot in the exercise of power, and frequently displayed the mere wantonness of passion and caprice. They determined to change the mode of paying wages, and that each man should not be paid by the piece, as was the general custom, but by a weekly allowance of their own fixing. This determination was enforced in the following manner:—The overlookers of a large factory were summoned before the committee, and ordered to pay the workpeople in their establishment at the rate of 21*s.* a week, and not by the piece. Upon this the overlookers produced the books of the mill, and proved to the committee that the men were then earning 23*s.* a week at piecework, and to comply with the demands of the union would therefore be to reduce the men's wages. The committee answered that the master was cheated by his men, and that their orders must be obeyed. They were obeyed, and at the end of the week the master discovered that his workpeople had only turned off as much as was worth 15*s.*, at the usual price. Thus the manufacturer, his men,

and the public, were all injured by this oppressive proceeding. The absence of the stimulus of being paid according to the work done was doubtless one cause of the relaxed exertion of the men, but the large decrease was owing to the express commands of the committee, given in pursuance of the policy which influenced them in advocating the Ten-hour Factory Bill—viz., to diminish the quantity of goods brought to market, with the view, as they stupidly supposed, to raise the rate of wages.

As the union never published the regulations which it wished to establish with respect to the employment of its members, masters often unconsciously infringed them. In these cases the innocent delinquent was visited with summary punishment, with as little scruple or mercy as though he had acted from design. In the middle of the week, for instance, when everything, apparently, was going on as usual, a signal was suddenly given by one of the men, every one of whom, without mentioning the grievance, would instantly leave his work, and in five minutes the factory would be deserted. In ordering these strikes, the policy of the union was, seemingly, to embarrass the manufacturer as much as possible; to stop him at the busiest season, when delay in the completion of orders, or in the prosecution of the various processes of manufacture, could least be endured. One manufacturer was punished by a turn-out of eight days' continuance, because he discharged a workman for negligence, and changed an overlooker from one department to another.

The organisation of the workmen in the stuff and worsted trades, the manufacturing processes in which are totally distinct from the woollen, was formed on precisely the same principles as the one we have just described. The most remarkable strike that arose from this union was that which took place in 1833, in the establishments belonging to Messrs. Hindes and Derham, by which all their workpeople, exceeding a thousand hands, were thrown out of employ. This turn-out ended in the complete discomfiture of the men, and it forms, we believe, the only instance in these trades of a manufacturer having, single-handed,

defied the whole power of one of the most extensive unions in England, and at length gaining the victory. This result was mainly attributable to the peculiar locality of the mills, one of which was situated in Dolphinholme, a small hamlet seven miles from Lancaster, a second in Leeds, and a third in Bradford. The first of these was the chief scene of the dispute, and to its distance from any large town, and to the facility of obtaining workmen from the neighbouring agricultural district, the successful resistance must in a great measure be ascribed. The little reason there was for a strike on the score of wages may be learned from the fact that the earnings of forty woolcombers, in the year previous to their turning out, averaged 41*l.* 11*s.* 9½*d.* each man, or 15*s.* 11¾*d.* weekly; and that the average earnings of the sixty-three families employed in the establishment for the same time, consisting of four persons and a minute fraction in every family, were 87*l.* 19*s.* 6*d.* Every mode of annoyance which the union could devise was put in practice on that occasion. The workmen lived in cottages belonging to their employers, and obstinately refused to quit, when the proprietors were compelled to bring no less than forty-seven actions of ejectment at the Lancaster Assizes, in order to obtain possession. Funds for the support of the men were subscribed by their fellow-workmen in every part of the country, amounting to 2,058*l.* 1*s.* 11*d.*, which were disbursed amongst the men; yet the expenses of the strike were exceedingly heavy, and it was stated that 4,000*l.* was beneath the sum which the union expended in this unsuccessful contest. This strike, however, was the cause of the invention of the woolcombing-machine, which wholly superseded the labour of the combers, who were the chief ringleaders in the affair, and inflicted a blow on the combination from which it never afterwards recovered.

The unions in the clothing districts were based upon the same principle, and the description of one—the combination of the stuff and worsted operatives—will suffice to give a general insight into the *modus operandi* of these bodies. This union divided the country into districts, each of which contained a certain number of lodges, or separate

clubs of workmen. Each district elected a governing committee, and also sent delegates (whose number was proportionate to the number of lodges it comprised) to what was called the 'grand lodge,' held twice a year. At this meeting the 'grand committee,' or council of directors, was chosen, consisting of seven delegates, which formed in theory the supreme governing power of the union, and which alone had the right of deciding upon strikes: when the object was to raise wages, and to prevent reductions of wages, the district authorities were empowered to order strikes. The place of meeting of the 'grand lodge' was annually changed, and the delegates who formed it were paid according to the distance they had to travel. Those who belonged to the district in which it held its sittings received 3*s.* 6*d.* daily, besides their dinners; while those from other districts received 5*s.* and their dinners, and 2*d.* per mile if they travelled 100 miles or under, and 3*d.* per mile if they travelled more than 100 miles and not beyond 200 miles, and exceeding that distance 4*d.* per mile. A monthly report was drawn up by each lodge, which contained an account of all its receipts and disbursements, and also of its general condition. These reports were communicated to the secretary of the 'grand lodge,' by whom they were distributed to the several districts. Full members were required by the rules to pay 1*s.* entrance-money, and 3*d.* weekly; and were entitled to receive, when they had struck work, a weekly allowance of 7*s.*, besides 1*s.* for a wife, and 1*s.* for each child under ten, when unemployed.

A perusal of the rules by which this and other unions profess to be guided, will give a very inaccurate idea of their operations. It is very doubtful whether any of them ever accurately defined the general nature, grounds, and extent of their demands on behalf of their members. New regulations were constantly framed, on the occurrence of incidents which suggested an object to be attained; the law was made for the occasion; success encouraged new demands, and the union was thus tempted gradually to extend their encroachments to a degree wholly inconsistent with the freedom of the manufacturer, and entirely de-

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structive to the true interests of both the employer and the employed.

The union men were frequently deceived as to observing their rules. They had to pay more than was enacted by the rules, and to receive less. By the regulations, of which an account has been given, a member of the combination had to pay weekly 3*d.*, and to receive 9*s.* or 10*s.* when out of work; whereas, in practice, the weekly contribution was frequently 1*s.*, 2*s.*, and sometimes even 5*s.*, and the allowance when on strike was the merest pittance that could suffice for subsistence. The power, too, which the rules gave to the committees of deciding on strikes, was perpetually encroached upon by the men; and even when the committee openly declared that a turn-out was wholly unjustifiable by the circumstances of the case, and contrary to the rules, the men were allowed to draw their subsistence from the union. When a strike took place, and any of those who joined in it were much in arrear with their subscriptions, they were disabled by the rules from receiving any assistance from the general funds. The enforcing of this regulation was obviously necessary to prevent bankruptcy; and yet it never could be enforced, for the obvious reason that a refusal to support those who were in arrear would compel them to accept employment at any price, and the object of a turn-out would be defeated. Hence the union never had any considerable sum at command, and was often brought to the verge of ruin from the exhaustion of its funds. The following account, copied from the books of a combination in the stuff and worsted trade, which includes the pecuniary transactions of the union from September 11, 1832, to February 2, 1833, will amply illustrate the truth of our remarks. The payments are for strikes at the different places mentioned; that of Dolphinholme, which stands highest in the list, has been already described:—

27454

CASH ACCOUNT.

Commencing September 11, 1832, *and ending February* 2, 1833.

Dr.	£	s.	d.	Cr.	£	s.	d.
Received from Kidderminster . . .	25	0	0	Paid to Keighley .	15	0	0
Received from Halifax	545	0	0	„ Dolphinholme	1,882	0	0
Received from Keighley . . .	536	0	0	„ Leeds . .	255	0	0
Received from Bradford . . .	1,822	10	3½	„ Bradford .	794	17	9
Balance due to Treasurer . . .	18	7	5½				
Total . .	2,946	17	9	Total . .	2,946	17	9

The admission into the Yorkshire unions, with its absurd ceremonials, its vulgar and repulsive oaths, and its pompous inanity of invocation, presents a curious phase of mental credulity. The old adage of *Omne ignotum pro mirifico* was never more truly verified. Certain of those, however, who have gone through the inaugural rites, have sometimes been unable to recover their proper senses and usual composure of mind for some weeks after their admission. The following is the performance enacted on the reception of members into the Woolcombers' Union :—

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Outside Tiler.*—*A member of the Union, who keeps guard on the outside of the room in which the members are assembled.*

Inside Tiler.—*Ditto on the inside.*

Principal Conductor.—*The person who conducts to the Lodge those who are to be initiated into the mysteries of the Union.*

President.

Vice-President.

Warden.

Secretary.

Members of the Union.

Workmen about to be Members.

The scene is generally the first-floor of a tavern, which is supposed to be doubly planked throughout, and the interstices

* 'Tiler' is technically a masonic term, which originated in the circumstance that those who were employed, on the first establishment of Freemasonry, to guard the door, were really the working tilers who had joined the confederacy.

filled up, in order to prevent anyone overhearing the ceremonies. The time is 8 or 9 o'clock in the evening, at which hour the *dramatis personæ*, with the exception of the principal conductor, and those who are about to enter the union, are supposed to be collected together for the performance of the drama. On one side of the apartment is a skeleton, above which is a drawn sword and a battleaxe, and in front stands a table, upon which lies the Bible. The principal officers of the union are clothed in surplices.

(*Members say the following prayer.*)

O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord, defend us in this our undertaking, that we may not fear the power of our adversaries, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

(*Outside Tiler knocks at the door.*)

INSIDE TILER.

Who comes here to disturb the peace and harmony of this our most worthy and honourable order?

PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR (*from without*).

I am not come here to disturb the peace and harmony of this your most worthy and honourable order. I am a brother, with strangers who wish to be admitted into your most worthy and honourable order.

INSIDE TILER.

Most worthy President, Vice, Secretary, and brothers all, a brother stands at the door with strangers, who wish to be admitted into this your most worthy and honourable order.

PRESIDENT.

In the name of the Lord, admit them.

(*Enter Principal Conductor, followed by the strangers, with their eyes bandaged. Members salute, and then sing a hymn.*)

PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR.

Strangers! within our secret walls we have admitted you,
Hoping you will prove honest, faithful, just, and true.
If you cannot keep the secrets we require,
Go hence—you are at liberty to retire.
Are your motives true?

STRANGERS.

Yes.

PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR.

Do you declare they are?

STRANGERS.

Yes.

PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR.

Then, brethren, to initiate these strangers we will now proceed,
And our most worthy master may proceed to read.

(*Members sing a hymn.*)

WARDEN.

Stand, ye presumptuous mortals! strangers' steps I hear,
And I must know your trade and business here.
By my great power, there's nothing can from vengeance stay us,
If you come here intending to betray us.

PRESIDENT.

Most worthy guardian of our sacred laws!
They are woolcombers, and wishful to protect the united cause.

WARDEN.

Then all is well.

VICE-PRESIDENT.

Strangers! you are welcome; and if you prove sincere,
You'll not repent your pains and labour here.
We have one common interest, and one common soul,
Which should by virtue guide and actuate the whole.
Our trade requires protection, by experience sad we know;
Our duty is to prevent recurrence of our former woe.
Our commonwealth was like some savage land,
Where the weak are slaves, and strongest bear command;
Where tyrants rule with uncontrolled sway,
And degraded subjects do their will obey.
Such was our domestic lot. Our suffering and our care
Enraged our minds with sadness and despair.
And when we had united, and our rights obtained,
We found that only half our point was gained.
Our interests were so many and so various,
The tenure of our rights so frail and so precarious,
That, had we not invented lodges our protection to ensure,
All—all would have come to nought, as it had done before.

Strangers! the design of all our lodges is love and unity,
With self-protection, founded on the laws of equity;
And when you have our mystic rites gone through,
Our secrets all will be disclosed to you.
We deem you worthy our friendship, trust, and confidence to share,
See that you make the prosperity of our cause your constant care.
Let your tongue be always faithful, your heart conceal its trust;
Woe—woe and dishonour attend the faithless and unjust!
Guards, give the strangers sight.

(*The bandages are removed from the eyes of the strangers, and they are placed opposite the skeleton.*)

PRESIDENT (*pointing to the skeleton*).

Strangers! mark well the shadow which you see;
It is a faithful emblem of man's destiny.
Behold that head, once filled with pregnant wit—
Those hollow holes, once sparkling eyes did fit;
This empty mouth nor lips nor tongue contains,
Of a once well-furnished head, see all that now remains.
Behold this breast, where a generous heart once moved,
Filled with affection, loving and beloved.
Mark well these bones: the flesh hath left its place—
These arms could even a tender wife embrace.
Those legs in gay activity could roam;
But, alas! the spirit's dead—the life is gone.
O Death! O Death! thy terrors strike us with dismay,
Only the spirit just, which hath left its empty clay,
Can set thee at defiance, and in triumph say,
O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?
The sting of death is sin—are we not sinners all?
Then upon us one day the heavy stroke of death must fall.

VICE-PRESIDENT.

Strangers! hear me, and mark well what I say:
Be faithful to your trust, or you may rue this day.
You are now within our secret walls, and I must know if you can keep a secret.

STRANGERS.

Yes.

VICE-PRESIDENT.

Then amongst us you will shortly be entitled to the endearing name of brother,
And what you hear, or see here done, you must not disclose to any other;

We are uniting to cultivate friendship, as well as to protect our trade,
And due respect must to all our laws be paid.
Hoping you will prove faithful, and all encroachments on our rights withstand,
As a token of your alliance,—give me your hand.

And now, shouldst thou ever prove deceitful, remember thy end—remember! Guards, put these strangers into darkness, and conduct them to our most worthy master, to be further instructed in this our most worthy and honourable order.

(*The eyes of the strangers are again bandaged, and they are then made to walk several times round the room, while the members stamp on the floor with their feet. They are then led to the table upon which the Bible is placed; the right hand of each is laid upon the Sacred Volume; the bandages are then removed from their eyes, and they take the following oath.*)

I, *A B*, woolcomber, being in the awful presence of Almighty God, do voluntarily declare that I will persevere in endeavouring to support a brotherhood known by the name of the Friendly Society of Operative Stuff Manufacturers, and other industrious operatives; and I solemnly declare and promise, that I will never act in opposition to the brotherhood in any of their attempts to support wages, but will, to the utmost of my power, assist them, on all lawful and just occasions, to obtain a fair remuneration for our labour. And I call upon God to witness this my most solemn declaration, that neither hopes, fears, rewards, punishments, or even death itself, shall ever induce me, directly or indirectly, to give any information respecting anything contained in this lodge, or any similar lodge connected with the society; and I will neither write nor cause to be written, upon paper, wood, sand, stone, or anything else, whereby it may be known, unless allowed to do so by the proper authorities of the society. And I will never give my consent to have any money belonging to the society divided or appropriated to any other purpose than the use of the society and support of the trade: so help me God, and keep me steadfast in this my most solemn obligation! And if ever I reveal either part or parts of this my most solemn obligation, may all the society I am about to belong to, and all that is just, disgrace me so long as I live, and what is now before me plunge my soul into the everlasting pit of misery! *Amen.*

VICE-PRESIDENT.

Guards, put these strangers into darkness. Rise and stand (*to the strangers*).

(*The strangers having been blindfolded, the members sing a hymn, and then salute. The strangers are then led out. Members then say the following prayer.*)

O God, who art the author of peace, &c. (*same as at the commencement*).

PRESIDENT.

In the name of King Edward the Third,* I declare this Lodge to be duly closed, and so it is.

God save our noble King
William the Fourth let's sing.
Brethren, ere we depart, let us join hand and heart
In this our cause.
May our next meeting be blest with sweet harmony,
Honour, and secrecy in the mechanics' cause! [*Exeunt.*

Revolting as this oath is in some respects, there is reason to believe, says a competent authority,† that it was originally still more strongly worded. 'In December 1832, a murder was committed, in the neighbourhood of Leeds, of a man who had refused to join in a turn-out that had been ordered by the Clothiers' Union. In the commission of this crime the members of the union were strongly implicated, and at the inquest held on the body, a witness who had once belonged to the union, the father of the murdered man, gave an account of the mode of making members. His statement of the ceremonial tallies pretty nearly with that which has been given, but being an illiterate man, and having to trust to his memory alone, his testimony is meagrely and confusedly given. From what can be gathered, however, from this witness, it is obvious that the oath which he took on joining the union included a more dreadful denunciation of himself, should he violate the oath,

* In this King's reign the woollen manufacture was introduced into England.

† *Character, Object, and Effects of Trades' Unions*, from which the oath and ceremony are copied.

than that given above. The publication of this evidence naturally excited in the public mind considerable disgust against the union, and in the next grand meeting, held six weeks afterwards, we find, by a book of their proceedings, that a resolution was passed substituting the present oath for the one previously used. There is, therefore, reason to suspect that, owing to this murder, and the circumstances that arose out of it, the terms of the oath were considerably softened, with the view of preventing the union suffering so much in public estimation, should the actual words ever be known. What the words were before the alteration can only be conjectured, but the oath contained in the above ceremonial is so nearly identical with one used by a political society at Glasgow in 1817, that probably the Scotch oath was taken entire. If this supposition be correct, the Yorkshire oath, before the murder, must have contained a clause by which the taker of it invoked upon himself, should he prove false, the punishment of death, to be inflicted on him by any member or members of the society.'

Happily, combinations in England, though they have been fertile in assaults and outrages of various kinds, have rarely led to murder. The only crime of late years that can be laid to the charge of the northern unions, is that which took place at Farsley, a small village in the neighbourhood of Leeds, in December 1832. The murdered man had become obnoxious to the unions by refusing to join a strike; and though the charge could not be proved against the members, the circumstances told so strongly against them, that the jury which sat on the inquest gave in their verdict, 'that they had too much reason to fear that his murder had been the consequence of fidelity to his master.' This was a euphemistic declaration of guilt against whoever committed the crime. On the night of the murder the union had had a long and violent discussion, which lasted from six to eleven o'clock; at half-past eight the object of their hatred was attacked in a lane by thirty or forty persons, and beaten to death by clubs. Not one of these cowardly and brutal assailants ever made a sign of contrition, and the perpetrators of the foul deed are to this day undiscovered.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BUILDING TRADES' STRIKE.

THE union in the building trade is as numerous and extended as is that in the cotton trade, and has been just as pernicious in its operations and results. In the spring of 1833, this body commenced operations in Manchester, Liverpool, and the neighbouring towns, by serving a requisition on the masters, which demanded an abandonment of the practice of erecting buildings on the system of contracts. About 1830 a custom was introduced by masters, in some single department of the building trade, entering into contracts with those who employed them, by which the contractor bound himself to furnish whatever was required for the construction of the whole edifice. Thus, in a majority of cases, the masters were not immediately engaged by the customers, but by a middleman or agent, who contracted for the erection of the entire building; and hence arose the ignorant outcry among the workmen, that the due profits of their labour were abstracted by those who were the channels between the producer and the consumer. The masters had been led into this practice by the expressed wish of their customers, to whom it was obviously of the greatest convenience; since it enabled them to obtain the estimate for any work from a single person versed in such calculations, who would be responsible for its completion at the computed price; and it removed the liability to deception and inaccuracy in reckoning the expense which must have resulted from an application to five or six persons in different trades, unconnected with each other. The masters, however, had no particular desire to continue

this system, and most of them complied with the request of their workmen to lay it aside. By this conduct the masters showed a disposition to meet the wishes of the men; but the latter were inexorable, and exhibited a feeling at once imperious and dictatorial, as the following missive will prove. The note was addressed to Mr. Holmes, a highly respectable Liverpool builder:—

Liverpool, 11th April, 1833.

Sir,—In consequence of an information received by our society that your job in Canning Street is a contract job, we felt ourselves in duty bound to furnish your men at that job with a notice to that effect, and, in consequence of such contract, to leave that building directly. You will please to understand that, previous to their return, we require to see your contract in our club-room, to be examined by our committee appointed for that purpose. When we receive this information we will be happy to be, sir,

Your most obedient humble servants,

The Operative Societies of Bricklayers'

Corresponding Secretary.

The masters made every possible concession, and complied with the most absolute requests of the union, yet this only gave rise to fresh and larger demands on the part of the men. The committee of the union issued a series of regulations, requiring the masters to abide by certain rules respecting the equalisation of wages, the number of apprentices they were to take, the use of machinery, and a variety of other equally vexatious matters—all more or less restrictive, and consequently injurious to the free transaction of business. The masters, in fact, were put *hors de combat*, and those who presumed to disobey the edicts ('laws' we ought to say) of the union magnates—which, as the world was duly informed, were, 'like those of the Medes and Persians, unalterable'—were either obliged to submit to the fine arbitrarily imposed upon them by the union, or an order was issued by that body to the workmen of the 'refractory master,' which placed him completely out of the pale of all business transactions. He was deserted by his men, and even unable to complete the contracts he had in hand. An instance or so, however,

of the arbitrary interference of the union between masters and men, will best illustrate our meaning. A Mr. Leatham, a master-mason at Liverpool, having discharged a workman from his employ, the committee of the union suspected that he had done so with the view of punishing the man for his supposed activity in managing the affairs of the combination. The committee sent Mr. Leatham a letter, ordering him to appear before them the same evening, and to give up the name of the person who had communicated to him the information respecting the part his discharged workman had taken in the union, and declaring that the whole of his men should instantly cease working if he refused obedience to this order. Mr. Leatham returned for answer, that the reason imputed to him for discharging the man was wholly untrue; but this answer was deemed unsatisfactory by the committee, and the next day he was left without a single workman.

There is another instance equally as arbitrary and unjustifiable as the preceding. Messrs. Patteson, master-masons at Manchester, discharged a couple of men, because they had refused to work at a building at which bricklayers not belonging to the union were employed. The Messrs. Patteson were honoured with the following expressive command from the union:—

GENTLEMEN,—It is considered that your conduct towards Robinson and Whitaker (the two alluded to) is quite inconsistent, and, to be brief, unless you take then again into your employ, on Saturday 8th instant, at one o'clock, all your hands will withdraw themselves on that night from your service, and so remain until you do reinstate the above-mentioned R. and W. And, further, that each and every one in such strike shall be paid by you the sum of four shillings per day for every day you refuse to comply.

Yours obediently, &c.,
OPERATIVE SOCIETIES OF BRICKLAYERS'
Corresponding Secretary.

The Messrs. Patteson refused to comply with this imperious edict, and the consequence was, as might have been anticipated, that every unionist in their employ left them.

These were not the only absurd and tyrannical restrictions imposed upon employers by the Builders' Union. The painters published a declaration, which stated that they had 'come to one unanimous determination, not to work for any gentleman, at any job whatever, who finds his own materials, or does not employ a regular master in the trade to find the same.' The dictatorial tone assumed by the union in some of its despatches would be ludicrous, were it not effective upon the misled and credulous men to whom it is addressed. No Chinese edict could surpass the following: 'We consider,' says one of these precious missives, 'that as you have not treated our rules with that deference you ought to have done, we consider you highly culpable, and deserve to be highly chastised.' The orders to cease working issued to the men were implicitly obeyed; and neither the folly of such obedience, nor the confidence in the goodwill or judgment of an employer, prevented a single individual from joining the strike, and assisting in the tyrannical proceedings against his employer.

Under these circumstances the masters, finding that concession was of no avail, and only served to encourage more unreasonable demands, while serious impediments were placed in the way of their business, came to the resolution to employ no workmen, except such as should sign a declaration that they did not belong to a trades-union. This was taking the bull by the horns, but, unfortunately, it was not found the most effective way of subduing him. The men refused to comply with the demand of the masters, and the consequence was a general turn-out, which arrested all building operations of any importance, and upon a grand scale, in Manchester, Liverpool, and the surrounding populous districts, for six months. The magnitude of the effects resulting from this step on the part of the workmen may be measured by the following fact: The consumption of bricks, in Liverpool alone, was reduced from one million weekly to twenty thousand; and a master-builder, who was called as a witness in a prosecution that took place in that town a

short time after, stated, in the course of his examination, that he had paid 11,000*l.* less in timber duties, and 800*l.* less in duties on bricks, that year than the year preceding, owing to the stoppage in the erection of buildings. The returns to the revenue from the excise, in the quarter succeeding the strike, show a decrease, as compared with the same quarter of the preceding year, of 183,740*l.*; and many startling reasons were given at the time, which fully accounted for the deficiency. The conduct of the Builders' Union satisfactorily explains the cause of the diminution; for if we consider that the excise on bricks of the poorest description at that period was 5*s.* 10*d.* per thousand, and that the duty in Liverpool would, on the reduced consumption of this class of building materials, have fallen off 3,430*l.* weekly, it will be seen that this turn-out fully explains the reduction that took place in the quarter mentioned.

As regards wages, the masters had made no attempt to reduce them, or to interfere with the usual privileges and practices of any one in their employ; and the earnings of the journeymen in the building trades had never been less than 24*s.* weekly during the preceding twenty years, and had sometimes exceeded that sum. Moreover, at the very time of the strike, the wages of the bricklayers had been increased 3*s.* weekly, and many of this class of men were in the habit of earning 35*s.* a week during the summer months, by working longer hours than usual. If we consider these wages in reference to the quantity of necessaries they could purchase at different periods, they will appear to have greatly advanced, as the following table of prices of provisions at Manchester, for the two extremities of the twenty years, will show:—

	1813		1833	
	s.	*d.*	*s.*	*d.*
Flour (good seconds), per dozen pounds	4	2	2	2
Butchers' meat (good), per pound	0	8½	0	6½
Bacon, per pound	0	11	0	6
Cheese, per pound	0	9	0	7
Potatoes, per load of 240 pounds	1	0	4	6
Butter, per 112 pounds	126	0	90	0
Soap, per pound	0	9	0	6

	1813 s. d.	1833 s. d.
Coals, per pound	0 8	0 5¾
Salt, per pound	0 3	0 0¼
Candles, per pound	1 0	0 6

Measuring the wages of working-men in the cost of clothing, the advance appears in a greater ratio than when measured in food :—

	1813 s. d.	1833 s. d.
Linen, per yard	1 8	0 9
Strong calico, per yard	0 10	0 4
Printed calico, per yard	2 2	0 7*

The masters made every effort to obtain men elsewhere, but they were not successful, owing to the intimidation practised by the unionists, which was of the most harassing and irritating character. The shops of the masters were picketed by strange men, who were relieved at intervals, which had the effect of preventing new men applying for employment; and if by chance any such were engaged, the buildings where they worked were surrounded by unionists, who, by hooting and other offensive demonstrations, endeavoured to impede the progress of the work.

The spirit of combination amongst the building trades did not confine itself to Lancashire, but gradually spread itself throughout the whole of England. A scheme, of what was ludicrously termed representative government, was drawn up, a selection of members from different counties was made, and the good people of Manchester were honoured by the holding of a *Builders' Parliament* in their thriving town. This body disdained to practise anything like secresy, but courted public attention by its outward and ostentatious display. Two hundred and seventy-five delegates, representing a constituency of upwards of 30,000 working-men, walked arm-in-arm through the streets, on their way to open the session; and the dress and general demeanour of the delegates certainly denoted that the body had some strength and considerable resources at command.

But the ordinary expenses which were incurred in

* These statements are from the Factory Commission's Report.

keeping up the *state-machinery* of this Parliament—the payment of salaries to the members, and the expenses allowed for other purposes, amounting to 3,000*l.*—cooled the ardour of the paying members of the union, and the Builders' Parliament, as might have been expected, soon died out.

The Lancashire builders' men continued their strike for more than six months, when, there being no prospect of the masters acceding to their proposals, the combination was abandoned, by the men returning penitently to their employers, and requesting work on the old terms. But the men paid rather dear for their folly, as they remained idle during the best part of the year, when labour was most in request, and wages were at the highest point, living at the same time on the scant allowance doled out to them from the union funds. The sum expended in making these allowances amounted nearly to 18,000*l.*, and as the payments to workmen who turned out never averaged, at the most, more than one-fourth of their earnings, four times this sum, or 72,000*l.*, was the loss which the working builders sustained in pursuit of their insane project. The loss of money was bad enough, but the evil habits which stole upon their hours of idleness were worse. In the false hope, however, of attaining their object, they had endured privations only second to actual starvation; and when the day of forced repentance came, the still further degradation of pauperism awaited them.

The failure of the strike was complete, and its disastrous results made a lasting impression on the minds of the Lancashire workmen, which time, it is hoped, will not easily obliterate. The following is the oath which every member of the union was required to take, and which was administered with the grotesque and absurd ceremonial accompaniments which are usual on such occasions:—

I do, before Almighty God and this loyal lodge, most solemnly swear that I will not work for any master that is not in the union, nor will I work with any illegal (non-unionist) man or men, but will do my best for the support of wages; and most solemnly swear to keep inviolate all the secrets of this order; nor will I ever consent to have any money for any purpose for

the use of the lodge and support of the trade; nor will I write, or cause to be wrote, print, mark, either on stone, marble, brass, paper, or sand, anything connected with this order: so help me God, and keep me steadfast in this my present obligation! And I further promise to do my best to bring all legal men that I am connected with into this order; and if ever I reveal any of the rules, may what is before me plunge my soul into eternity!

We say nothing of the coarse and vulgar blasphemy contained in the oath, and it is only from a desire to give an illustration of the doings of these unions that we have transferred it to our pages.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LONDON BUILDING TRADES' STRIKE.

This strike was marked by features which were certainly much modified, when compared with those which preceded it. It was accompanied with less violence and coercion towards the dissident members of the trade than had generally been shown, and was, altogether, of as mild a character as any strike upon record. There were seven building trades involved in the movement—the joiners, carpenters, masons, bricklayers, painters, plasterers, and labourers; and the aggregate numbers who turned out were calculated at 7,856, of whom 4,899 were skilled artisans, and 2,957 labourers. The nine-hours' movement was the principal cause of the strike, as the following manifesto clearly shows:—

NINE HOURS' MOVEMENT.

Important Notice to the Operatives of the Building Trades.

The master-builders having refused to concede the nine hours as a day's work, the Conference of the United Building Trades have been directed by the members of the movement to call upon a firm to cease work; having done so, they now appeal to you to aid them in supporting the men now on strike at Messrs. Trollope and Sons. It is earnestly hoped that no workman will go in to supplant them till they have gained their object.

'It is expected that every man will do his duty!'

By order of the Executive,

GEO. POTTER, *Secretary.*

N.B.—Any firm striking for the above object without the sanction of the Conference will not be supported.

The committee sits daily at the Paviors' Arms, Johnson Street, Westminster.

The demand of ten hours' wages for nine hours' work had been agitated at intervals for some years, and was met by a set of resolutions passed at a meeting at the Freemasons' Tavern by the masters. The reason put forth by Mr. Potter for the pressure being enforced at that particular juncture was, that the trades were overstocked; that thousands of unemployed men were hanging about in idleness, while others were working even more than the habitual ten hours. The superior men, in fact, were fully employed; while the inferior men, as they would be always under such circumstances, were out of work. Mr. Potter's plan was, therefore, to foist a number of inferior men upon the masters, by depriving the employers of their best men for several hours per day, and of their next best men for one hour per day, without reduction of wages. This was Potter's premium upon incapacity, and his corresponding coercion of capacity—the inverse rule of all rational and enlightened action.

The master-builders met this movement of the strike by closing their works till the assailed firm could resume its business. The committee, however, of the masters made a report, in which was recommended a condition of employment that the men should declare themselves free to make their own labour-bargains, and resolved to remain so. The employers, in other terms, avowed their approbation of combinations for mutual aid in sickness or other misfortune, and in old age, while objecting to such as encroach on the liberties of the buyers and sellers of labour. The nine-hours' demand from this time died away. The masters however obtained, by some means or other, from four to five thousand men, a number sufficient to carry on the suspended works, which had a material effect upon the hands on strike; for the latter perceived that they had committed an egregrous blunder, not only by suffering a defeat, but by letting a number of new competitors into the labour-market, which was already, according to their own account, somewhat overstocked.

CHAPTER XV.

STRIKES IN IRELAND.

THE strikes amongst the workmen of Ireland have been quite as numerous, and perhaps more destructive in their results, than those which have taken place in this country. Mr. O'Connell, to his honour be it recorded, made an intrepid and courageous stand against the system of strikes in Ireland, and gave a graphic summary of their operation in a speech which he delivered in the House of Commons, in February 1838. The following portion of the speech was much commented upon at the time, and gave rise to an animated discussion in Parliament, as to the cause of Ireland's decline in manufacturing industry:—

Combination (said the learned member) was driving trade out of Dublin and other places in Ireland. As an illustration of this system, he might mention that the business of calico-printing, which had been carried on in Belfast, was taken from it, in consequence of the combination of the men engaged in it. The party who had embarked his capital in the trade sold off his materials, and the result was that 107 families were thrown out of bread. In the town of Bandon, in the south of Ireland, a cotton-factory was established, which was likely to give employment to many persons in that neighbourhood. The proprietor fitted up his machinery, and had received several orders; when that was known to the workmen, they turned out for higher wages. The proprietor remained long enough to complete the orders he had got, but then gave up the business, and thus that neighbourhood lost an outlay in wages of 11,000*l.* or 12,000*l.* With respect to the city of Dublin, he was sure he did not overstate the matter when he said that wages to the amount of 500,000*l.* a year were withdrawn from it, in the manufacture of almost every article of consumption. In the foundry trade alone not less than 10,000*l.*

or 11,000*l.* a year was sent out of Dublin, which would have been retained if the system of combination did not exist. Mr. Classon, who attended at the Trades' Committee a short time back, would have stated that, had he had an opportunity of being heard. Mr. Sheridan, a master manufacturer, did state at one meeting that his workmen were his masters—that he must act according to their dictation, if he had any hope of carrying on his business. In fact, they dictated everything. In the case of one man, who had worked thirty years in the factory, the employer asked the man how he could serve him. The man said he should be greatly benefited by having his son taken as an apprentice, and that it would be an act of charity. The boy was so taken, but the workmen turned out against it, and the boy was withdrawn. The articles of hats, boots, and shoes were imported into Dublin, instead of being manufactured there. So greatly did the combination amongst tailors raise the price of clothes, that a man might go from Dublin to Glasgow, and, after spending a day or two in amusing himself, return, and save the whole expense of his journey, in the difference between the price he should have to pay for a suit of clothes in Dublin and that for which he could get them at in Glasgow. To such an extent did the combination amongst the tailors go, that it was found expedient to bring tailors over from Germany. Some branches of trade had been already removed altogether from Dublin. Not very long ago there were four shipbuilders in extensive business in Dublin. There were at present not one, and if a vessel coming into the port required repairs, she was cobbled up in such a way as to enable her to get across the Channel, or to get down to Belfast, where she could be thoroughly repaired. What was the cause of this? It was, that when there was any business so as to give employment to the workmen, they at once turned out for higher wages. One man, who had resisted the turn-out, and who had agreed to work for a lower rate of wages, was assassinated in the open day, in the presence of twenty persons. In another case, a man had built a boat for the canal; the boat was approved of, and an order was given for ten such boats. Mr. Fagan, who got the order, set his men to work; but they, finding there was so much to be done, turned out for a higher rate of wages; and the result was that the contract was taken to Belfast, and Mr. Fagan supplied the timber which was to be used in the construction of the boats. This system of combination was carried on by clubs, to which the workmen were called on to pay three shillings per week. This was before the repeal of the Combination Laws. After

that repeal the clubs lost much of their power. They could not act as they did before, but they did by others what they did not wish to do by themselves. Four murders were committed, not by the clubs, but by men whom they paid for that purpose. Many who belonged to the body would not sanction such atrocious proceedings; but they assented as a body to acts from which they would have shrunk as individuals. In Cork, within the last two or three years, no fewer than thirty-seven individuals had been burnt with vitriol, many of whom were deprived of sight. These were the results of the acts of the trades-clubs. In Dublin four murders had been committed by similar agency. The clubs did not themselves act openly, but they had paid agents, whom they called *welters*. Those welters attacked any man who was pointed out to them, and murdered him when the opportunity offered. There was a great difficulty in getting evidence against those parties, for, unfortunately, so little sympathy existed in Ireland between the governors and the governed, that it was a matter of great difficulty to get the law enforced in any case. Could it, then, be a matter of surprise that such outrages remained so long without punishment? He had strong evidence of the atrocity of the crimes committed by the welters, whose number amounted to about 6,000. On Thursday last the premises of a timber merchant were set on fire, immediately after his having been served with a notice. These men were ready to execute any vengeance according to order, and although the trade combinations did not commit actual offences themselves, they had always a standing army in the welters. It was thus that employers were controlled. A fortnight previously to this last disgraceful crime, a man and his wife having died of cholera, the master in whose employment they had been, with praiseworthy humanity, took two helpless orphans, the children of these people, as apprentices. The combinators revolted at this, and insisted on their immediate discharge, to which the master was obliged to accede, having no power to resist their mandates.

It is evident that the combinations of workmen in Ireland have been characterised by much greater violence than they have in this country, although based upon similar principles, and aiming at similar objects. To prevent the use of improved machinery—to prohibit piecework—to equalise the wages of the skilled and the unskilled, of the diligent and the indolent, of the strong and the weak, and, as a rule, to compel the manufacturer to employ his capital,

his knowledge, and his capacity under the direction of his shortsighted, rapacious, and incapable workmen — such were the aims which governed the Irish workman, wherever manufacturing industry chanced to struggle for an existence. The Handloom Commissioners, in the portion of their valuable report which alludes to Ireland,* say:—

It might be supposed that no tyranny could be more absolute, more oppressive, or more merciless, than that of a Glasgow combination. But the state of Dublin is as much worse than that of Glasgow, as the constant presence of a disease is worse than a tendency to its recurrence. The disposition to outrage, to maim, to assassinate, which in Glasgow appears gradually to grow with the misery of a prolonged strike, seems in Dublin to be an habitual feeling. In both places assassination appears to be deliberately planned and executed; but while in Glasgow it is the last weapon resorted to in a desperate strife, in Dublin it is inflicted in the mere wantonness of power.

The result of these combinations in the sister-country is, therefore, that capital has been shy to enter it, and feverishly anxious to quit it at the first convenient opportunity; while, as regards labour, one of the witnesses in the Poor-law Inquiry said truly:—

Ireland is the dearest country in the world for labour: every description of artisan demands at least one-third more than in England. There is even a combination among the common porters on the quay, who would rather starve than work under the regulated price. Bribery has no effect upon my men, and if I remonstrate they stop directly.

The incapacity and indifference of the Irish artisan are amply accounted for by the combinations which, by prohibiting piecework, and requiring all workmen to be paid by the day, at the same rate, and also by prohibiting a good workman from exerting himself, have destroyed the motive and spring to industry. 'I consider it,' says Mr. Murray, once an eminent architect and builder in Dublin,† 'a very hard rule among them, that the worst workman that ever took a tool in his hand should be paid the same as the best

* Commissioners of Handloom Weavers' Report, p. 108.
† Committee on Combinations (1838).

—but that is the rule and regulation of the society, and that there was only a certain quantity of work allowed to be done; so that, if one workman could turn more work out of his hands, he durst not go on with it. There is no such thing as piecework; and if a bad man is not able to get through his work, a good workman dare not go further than he does.'

According to the evidence of Mr. Murray—who had been thirty seven years in business, and was at the head of his profession—he 'during that time had been severely beaten upon more than one occasion, and for two years forced to carry arms.' One of his men had also been beaten to death in broad daylight, and another shot. At three different times his workmen had likewise been attacked, beaten, and maimed in his own yard, while at other times they had been waylaid and injured on their way to work; and his whole establishment had been maliciously set fire to and burned down.

Suffice it to state that the trades-unions of Ireland established a despotism of a most withering character over the great body of the working-classes, which scarcely had a parallel in any other portion of the kingdom, and which was the more severe and oppressive from its being established by their own brethren. It was well observed by Lord St. Leonards (when Sir Edward Sugden), in a speech which he made in the House of Commons in 1838, relative to the cotton-spinners' strike—that 'no despotism is so degrading as that which is inflicted by one section of the working-classes over the other.' Of the truth of this remark, the proceedings described by Mr. O'Connell, which we have just cited, afford a striking and memorable example. In the course of three years, ten lives were sacrificed, in Dublin alone, in consequence of combinations and strikes, and in no one instance were the perpetrators brought to justice.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE WORKING CLASSES IN FRANCE.

The working-classes belonging to the great centres of industry in France entertain similar views to those of the working-classes of this country, in relation to employer and employed. The French *ouvrier* is, perhaps, a little more advanced in his opinions, as regards the institution of property, than the English workman is. When we say advanced, we mean in the direction of *Communism*, which ignores the rights of property, and is an uncompromising enemy to its individual accumulation. Both the French and English working-men, however, are under the influence of the same utopian dream; they imagine that they can regulate wages by artificial means, and that they can enforce their demands upon their employers by strikes and combinations.

We have endeavoured to show, in a preceding chapter, that the labour of our working-men, taken on a broad and general scale, is more productive than that of any body of men in Europe, and, by deduction, that the remuneration of that labour is upon a scale fully commensurate with its excellence. France, perhaps, comes nearest to us in this respect, and Belgium next, but both in most directions are much behind us. We need scarcely remark that the amount of employment which any country can furnish to its working population must depend upon the amount of disposable capital which it possesses, and in this respect England has proved herself, hitherto, perfectly unequalled. And not only is the amount of employment regulated by the abundance of disposable capital, but the excellence in workmanship of those employed is intimately affected by

it. Louis Blanc, however, a leading *doctrinaire* of the French working classes, exclaimed, upon the eve of a memorable occasion,* '*La tyrannie du capital est frappée au cœur*,'* whilst contemplating the picture of the working-man just emancipated from the *atelier* of the capitalist. Yes—it is too true that capital is, and has been, in some respects, a bad master in France. The employment which it affords is precarious, and it occasionally beats down the wages of labour with relentless assiduity. But *needy masters*, in these respects, are perforce bad masters everywhere. Even in England we see something of this occasionally, when capital is 'short;' and in France it is generally short, compared with the long muster-roll of the numbers who are pressing upon it for work. If capital is apparently tyrannical towards the working-classes—uncertain in the extent of its operations, and extortionate in the labour which it exacts—its crippling exigencies, and not its overwhelming resources, are at the bottom of its meanness. If capital was abundant, it would be generous, but only by the compulsion of circumstances. Capital would then bid high for the services of labour, just as labour offers low for the employment of capital. To do away with the tyranny of capital over labour, we have only to make capital, instead of labour, redundant.

From the marked disparity between capital and labour which generally obtains in France in most industrial undertakings, an uneasiness amongst the working-classes has long prevailed, and which, gathering itself into force during the Revolution of 1848, has spread a political and social malady over nearly all classes of that body. One of her most eminent economists,† speaking of the working-men as a class, says:—

It is impossible not to recognise the remarkable progress which our working-classes have made in their material wellbeing; but their social improvement is far from keeping pace with their material advancement, and it is this grievous contrast which furnishes the key to the evils which at present afflict them. A

* *L'Organisation du Travail.*

† *Des Classes Ouvrières en France*, par M. Blanqui.

feeling of pride has seized hold of the working-men, and, though they have sufficient intelligence to detect the weak side of human institutions, they have not sufficient to amend them, and to help in fixing them upon a stable basis. The force of absolute sovereignty blinds them to such a degree, that they believe they can do whatever they attempt, and accomplish whatever they have the audacity to undertake, by the mere strength of numbers. The resistance of facts and of certain immutable laws irritate and exasperate our working-classes, and they gladly treat as enemies the few enlightened men who oppose them with argument and reason.

When, however, we analyse the several sections of the working-classes, whether in cities or in towns—masons, carpenters, locksmiths, painters, shipwrights, artisans (like those of Paris and Lyons), printers, tailors, and shoemakers—we perceive that there is no guarantee that the labour of these classes will be so permanent and secure as it was formerly. Never till our day was the notion entertained that society would ensure work for the labouring classes. An extreme and meretricious foresight has succeeded to the habitual apathy and indifference of our working-men; and they are persuaded that they have the right to demand employment of the state, and that the latter, having the power, is in duty bound to find it for them, and even to guarantee them repose in old age.* . . . . Such is the malady which cruelly complicates the other infirmities of the working-classes: they sincerely believe that their happiness can be secured by political measures, and that they can vote themselves, under the form of subventions and premiums, the means of existence, and thus secure the advantages which can only be derived from the indefatigable energy of individual labour. The great error of these times, is the belief that the Government, whatever may be its form, can render itself responsible for the welfare of all, as though it had the power to give more than it receives, and do more for all the citizens united than each citizen can do for himself. This deplorable error is the worm which eats into the vitals of our working population—the real plague of the country.

It is evident that the working-classes of France attribute to the power of the state a capacity for working miracles which are quite beyond its reach. The state can no more

* 'On leur a persuadé qu'ils avaient le droit de demander à l'État, et que l'État avait le devoir et la possibilité de leur garantir du travail toute leur vie et du repos dans leurs vieux jours.'

create capital than a Rosicrucian could. It may take disposable capital from one class, and transfer it to another; but there will be no more disposable capital in the country, to support labour in the work of reproduction, than there was before. Disposable capital, though ostensibly represented by money, is in reality nothing else but the stock of commodities which a country can reserve to be expended upon the reproduction of other commodities; and the rate at which this reserve increases truly indicates the rate of its accumulation of capital. The state, by taking capital from one class, and bestowing it upon another, may benefit the latter just as long as the consumption of that capital is going on, but not one moment longer. On the contrary, that capital once consumed, the working-classes, in such a case, would be worse off than before; for, although they might not have devoured the goose, they would have eaten the nest-egg. Capital is as shy as any bird: only disturb its nest, and it will take wing for another spot, where it can build and multiply in greater security. The state therefore, by endowing the working-classes with capital, at the expense of other classes, so far from augmenting the fund for the support of labour in the work of reproduction, even if it wasted nothing, would seriously diminish the number of contributors to it.

The shortlived Republic of 1848 sprang directly from the working-classes, but it was only intended as a means to an end—the initiation of *Socialism*, the partial establishment of which would have plunged France headlong into the abyss of destruction. Happily, a strong hand was put forth to save her, otherwise her civilisation would have received a terrible shock. Socialism, however, largely permeates the artisan class of France, and there is scarcely a section of that vivacious and mercurial body which is not more or less infected with its pernicious dogmas. In the capital, and indeed in most of the great seats of manufacturing industry, Socialistic doctrines prevail amongst the working-men; and were the law not against public demonstrations of opinion, Socialism would exhibit itself in a more prominent shape than it does at the

present moment in France. Again, coalitions of workmen, for any purpose, are strictly prohibited, any violation of the law in this respect being penal, so that the workman has little chance of giving expression to his opinions. The law * on this head is thus explained:—

A *coalition* of workmen, according to the penal code, is a contract between several workmen, belonging to a single shop or to several shops, to exercise their influence upon other workmen, and induce them to do what they would not have done of their own accord. Thus, a coalition can prevent workmen from working in a certain shop, or for a certain price, their principal object being to raise wages. The coalitions of masters are equally interdicted by law, although they are exclusively confined to the lowering of wages. The terms of imprisonment vary from six days to three months, and the fines from sixteen to three thousand francs. The leaders of the *coalition*, whether masters or men, are treated with much greater severity, the law condemning them to an imprisonment of from two to five years; and after the expiration of their term, they are placed under the *surveillance* of the police for at least two, and possibly six, years, according to the degree in which they have violated the law.

The workmen of Paris are mostly of two classes—the *migratory*, which is the least numerous, and is principally recruited from the provinces; and the *stationary*, which comprises the great bulk, and may be termed the peculiar life, of the working portion of the capital. The masons belong to the first class, making their way up to Paris in the fine portion of the season, and returning home in the winter months, being mostly small proprietors of land. The masons are a body of steady men, and, during their sojourn in the capital, live with the economy suitable to their position. They are mostly single men, at least in Paris. They pay about 12 francs each per month for lodgings, and their living costs about 48 francs per month—their principal meal comprising soup, bread, boiled beef, vegetables, salad, cheese, and a moderate quantity of wine and *eau-de-vie*. These men seldom frequent the *cabaret*; and when arrived at the age of 45, or thereabouts, the mason, having completed

* *Les Ouvriers en Famille*, par M. A. Audiganne.

his *régime* of periodic emigrations to the capital, ordinarily settles down in a house with a vegetable garden, one or two acres of arable and pasture land, a cow, and several domestic animals, worth altogether from 8,000 to 10,000 francs.* The father of the family then remains at home, to cultivate his bit of land, and employ the surplus of his time in working for the neighbouring cultivators; and this he deems an ample compensation for his preceding labour. Their habits, however, form a striking contrast to those of the stationary workmen of the capital; but they are not destined, we think, to endure long. For some years past the young mason, during his sojourn in Paris, has shown himself more disposed to contract an illegitimate union than he did formerly—to spend more on clothes, and to frequent what are considered as places of pleasure; and as he becomes less capable of elevating himself to the condition of a *propriétaire*, he is more accessible to the coarse and sour feeling which is frequently expressed against the superior classes of society. The young mason at length becomes more offensive than the stationary workman of the capital, for he combines a grossness with a licentiousness which is not to be found in the Parisian *sédentaire*.

The stationary workmen of Paris, from the fact of their working in the capital all the year round, comprise all conditions and every variety of industry, from those who work in first-class mechanical shops, to those who work in the domestic *atelier*, which is only capable of employing a couple of hands besides the master. Notwithstanding their diversity of character and calling, they have, however, one distinguishing feature—an utter absence of economy. The ordinary types of Parisian workmen are characterised by the extent of their expenditure, and particularly by the nature and character of their dress and recreations. These, principally, may be classed under two categories. The workmen of the first category imitate the habits of the *bourgeoisie*, although they wear no other clothes than the blouse, the waistcoat, or the paletot; their principal recreation being outside the barriers, in the *cabarets* and *guinguettes*, where

* *Les Ouvriers européens*, par M. F. le Play (Paris).

they meet their fellow-workmen. These workmen seldom read the journals, and rarely trouble themselves about politics, except it be in relation to something that comes within their immediate sphere of action. They, however, envy their employers, not so much for the influence the latter possess, but because the employers are not restrained from prolonging, beyond Monday, the weekly debauch in which the workmen themselves mostly indulge. These men lightly contract social engagements, and continue in an irregular kind of life to old age, unless the influence of an industrious woman induces them to adopt a married life. The workmen of the second category, by the nature of their occupations, or under the influence of a certain intellectual culture, developed by the circumstances which surround them, are in the habit of imitating the furniture, the clothing, and the recreations of the petty *bourgeoisie*. They have, however, like their patterns, little inclination for matrimony; but their engagements are more lasting, and they often exact for their mistresses the same respect as would be paid to a married woman. These workmen frequent the theatres, the small *cafés*, and the public balls of Paris, where they meet the young men connected with commerce, and with the small manufactories. The households of this class, however, are seldom kept with care, for their furniture is neglected; and as articles of clothing form at least two-thirds of their capital, these are frequently pledged. As to holidays, the Parisian workman seldom makes more than 280 clear days in the year; and, whatever may be the demand for his labour, the Monday is always devoted to pleasure. The weekly receipts are mostly absorbed in food, while the remainder goes for lodging, clothing, and recreation. Nothing is saved for the rainy day, as a rule, and provision for the morrow seldom enters into their calculation. M. le Play, in the notes to his elaborate work on the Labouring Classes of Europe,* alluding to the religious feelings of the Parisian workman, remarks:—

The religious sentiment is extinguished in the minds of the workman, and even in that of his female companion. They never

* *Les Ouvriers européens: Notes Diverses.*

go to church, nor perform any religious duty. They seldom remain faithful to each other; but, when a couple of this class are really married, the virtuous feelings are sedulously preserved, and both man and wife hold a worthy and influential position.

The altercations between masters and men, as regards wages on the one hand, and taking work home on the other, are almost incessant. To use a homely and familiar phrase, both employer and employed are generally in 'hot water.' This continuous antagonism generates a feeling of sourness in the mind of the workman, who otherwise, to use the precise language of M. le Play, *se montrerait dévoué et désintéressé.* What, however, through misunderstandings with his master, and a consequent loss of time, holidays, competition with his fellow-workmen, want of foresight, and neglect of economic habits to an extreme degree, this class of Parisian workmen, through life exposed to strange vicissitudes, are in old age mostly destitute of the means of existence.

The journeyman tailor, however, plays a prominent part in the drama of a Parisian *ouvrier's* life. 'In these later times,' says M. le Play, 'the feelings of antagonism, provoked by social organisation, have been excited by those who desire to profit by them—by political parties who are in search of auxiliaries; and, under these influences, the Parisian workman has been led, as it were accidentally, to take part in political affairs, having neither a strong inclination for such matters, nor the intellectual aptitude to comprehend them. The working tailor, however, whose class are very numerous, is a type of those who devote themselves to politics; he reads with avidity the productions of writers who describe the contests between employers and employed, and who anticipate a new social *régime*, in which the workman, regardless of forethought, shall have greater weight than he has at present. He does not willingly follow the development of the social system proposed in 1848, but he extends his sympathies to the writers who labour to realise that state of things. The histories of the Revolution of 1789 are the favourite reading of the working tailor, who dwells with the utmost

satisfaction upon the thought that the revolution was desirable, and that it has ameliorated the condition of the humbler classes of society. The dramatic aspect, too, in which several celebrated writers have placed certain men and certain events, delights the Parisian tailor; and, he becomes animated at the recital of the deeds of those who, by their talent and their energy, largely contributed to the destruction of the ancient order of things. Not perceiving that the principal cause of his inferior social position is in himself, he loves to think that the men of the first Revolution are the models of those who will initiate a new system, which will enable him to remove the evils which at present weigh upon his class, and retard its progress in social life. The praise of the popular heroes of the '89 Revolution often forms the conversation of the shop, and the workmen who declaim the best soon acquire an ascendancy over their companions. The working-man of Paris, in short, and especially the working tailor, vaguely dreams of a social revolution, which in its results will contribute, not only to the progress of society, but to the grandeur and glory of the state.'

As regards the general character of the Parisian workman, M. le Play says, and says fairly:—

> The defects of the Parisian workman are often allied to certain remarkable qualities of character. He is, for example, capable of the most generous acts; he is likewise compassionate, disinterested, and enthusiastic. But in his present straitened circumstances, and through the want of foresight, these faculties are rarely exercised, and may be said to be completely in abeyance. An immoderate desire for pleasure, and the penury which is consequent upon indulging in it, frequently causes him to leave his aged parents, whom he would gladly succour, in utter want. He cannot, however, relinquish his weekly indulgence, which always leaves him with an empty pocket.

The *élite* of the working-classes are, however, the modellers, engravers, designers, chasers, and sculptors. Of these M. le Play, in his concluding remarks on the Parisian workman, says:—

> In enumerating the principal categories of Parisian workmen, we must not omit the modellers, the engravers, the designers, the

chasers, and the sculptors, who take so important a part in the production of objects of art, of taste, and of luxury, and whose reputation is known throughout the world. It is a doubtful question whether the residence in a great city developes, in the masses, the artistic aptitudes to the same degree that are produced spontaneously in the loneliness and solitude of country life; but it is evident that the taste and the manual dexterity of residential Parisian workmen are the exclusive means by which the artistic conceptions of Parisian industry are executed. It is also worthy of remark, that the men who obtain the highest wages by their ability are the least inclined to economise; while, at the same time, they are the best representatives of the type whose dominant traits we have endeavoured to describe.

Previous to the recent movement of certain classes in Paris for an advance of wages, the general earnings of workmen in the different branches of industry in that capital were much below those paid to similar classes in this country, which the following table, drawn up from an authentic source, fully verifies:—

WORKMEN'S WAGES IN PARIS.

	Frs. C.	Dead season. *Months.*		Frs. C.	Dead season. *Months.*
Gunsmiths	4 0	5	Blacksmiths	5 0	3
Straw-hat makers	5 0	7	Chimney-sweepers	4 50	6
Goldbeaters	4 50	3	Umbrella-makers	3 50	4
Bakers	5 0	4	Opera-glass makers	3 50	6
Harnessmakers	3 25	3	Glovers	4 50	4
Jewellers	5 0	6	Watchmakers	4 0	4
Hatters	5 0	5	Printers	4 50	3
Carpenters	4 0	4	Block-printers	5 0	4
Braziers	4 0	4	Boxmakers	4 0	4
Tilers	5 0	4	Lithographers	3 50	3
Shoemakers	3 50	3	Lampmakers	4 0	3
Wheelwrights	3 50	5	Joiners	4 0	4
Curriers	4 50	4	Farriers	3 50	3
Cutters	3 20	3	Stonecutters	5 20	3
Chasers	5 0	4	Masons	4 50	4
Confectioners	5 0	6	Opticians	4 0	6
Compositors	4 0	3	Goldsmiths	6 0	6
Wood gilders	3 0	3	Paviors	4 50	4
Metal gilders	5 0	4	Painters	4 50	5
Cabinetmakers	3 50	3	Plumbers	5 20	4
Tinmen	4 20	3	Saddlers	3 50	4
Letterfounders	4 0	3	Wood-turners	4 20	4
Brassfounders	4 50	3	Tailors	5 0	6
Ironfounders	4 50	3	Tanners	4 50	4

'What tears,' ejaculates Louis Blanc,* 'do each of these numbers represent! — what cries of anguish! — what maledictions violently kept down in the depths of the heart! Here, nevertheless, behold the condition of the people of Paris, the radiant city of science, the city of the arts, the radiant capital of the civilised world; a city, moreover, whose physiognomy only reproduces too faithfully all the hideous contrasts of a civilisation so much vaunted: superb promenades and dirty streets; dazzling shops and dark *ateliers*; theatres, where they sing, and obscure nooks, where they weep; monuments for the triumphant, and receptacles for the suicide—the *Arc de l'Étoile* and the *Morgue!*' There is some truth in this picture, but it is highly coloured, and the contrasts are too sharply drawn.

The agitation, however, among the workmen of Paris for an advance of wages has been for some time on the increase, and at present it has become, both to the civil authorities and the employers of labour, somewhat alarming. A general rise of wages, no doubt, will take place amongst all classes of workmen in the leading cities of France; and as they seem to manage these matters without any coercion of their fellow-men, if their demands be not strictly within the limits of reason, we have little doubt but that they will obtain their ends. A great change, in all probability, will also take place in certain branches of industry in regard to the mode of working, and the responsibility which is sometimes imposed upon the workmen. Take, for example, the recent demand of the cabinetmakers, which has mainly been complied with by the masters, and which throws a curious light upon the inner life of a Parisian workshop. The operative cabinetmakers, a short time since, addressed a circular to their employers, through a committee appointed by themselves. The terms proposed were:—1. The day's work to be fixed at ten hours, with 5f. wages; the payment for extra hours to be 20 per cent. in addition.—2. When men work by the hour, the lowest salary is to be 50c. the hour for ten hours; 20 per cent. in addition for extra

* *Organisation du Travail* (Paris, 1847).

hours.—3. Fifteen per cent. to be added to the price of all models of furniture hitherto executed by piecework, and the wages for new models to be arranged by the masters and operatives, the increase of wages being taken into account.—4. The system of requiring operatives to supply materials to be abolished. The committee also proposed:—1. A complete transformation of the tools used by the operatives; 2. A simplification of the management of the workshops; 3. The suppression, as far as possible, of the middlemen; and 4. An enquiry as to the possibility of forming a joint-stock bank for the operatives.

The middleman, or *marchandeur*, is stoutly opposed by a large portion of the workmen in France, and *marchandage*, or piecework, was abolished by the Provisional Government in 1848.* M. Thiers, however, has ably defended piecework, and shows that by its abolition the only means of sharing in the profits of capital have been taken away from the working-man. In arguing against *Socialism*, M. Thiers† maintains that the workman, whose only wealth is bodily strength, may become a capitalist by means of piecework, and rise in the social scale, like his master. But the organisers of labour, on the establishment of the national workshops in 1848, 'had the wit to destroy this system, and to break the ladder, or at least permit it to be broken by the bad workmen, who had never been able to pass the first round.' He says:—

There are certain intelligent and industrious mechanics who work longer and better than others—who can, in a day, do two or three times more work than some of their comrades, and, as regards workmanship, better than any of them. These certainly deserve to be distinguished and encouraged. Paid by the day, these men would have no motive to work better or more than their comrades, and, even if raised to a higher class, they would have no motive for conducting themselves differently from the workmen of that class; while, on the contrary, by proportioning

* 'Quant au marchandage, un décret du gouvernement provisoire l'a interdit comme étant l'exploitation du travailleur.'—*Question des Travailleurs*, par M. Michel Chevalier.

† *The Rights of Property*: a Refutation of Communism and Socialism.—Adolphe Thiers.

their wages exactly to what they are capable of doing, each one is led to produce as much as he can. It is therefore necessary to find a system of remuneration proportionate to the labour of these adepts. But this is not all. There is yet a class of workmen for whom it is important to devise a method of employment different from time-work or day-work. To this class belong all the young workmen.

The industrious youth, who gives promise of skill, also deserves to be encouraged, and, above all, to be overlooked and taught. A master with a thousand men in his employ, who is condemned to cares of every kind—who has the raw material to purchase, produce to dispose of, contracts to make, and extensive connexions to keep up—cannot go and put right the youth who holds the file or the chisel badly. He can neither watch over him, direct, nor train him. In this inability, the youth would be left without instruction, without advance, in an inferior class, from which he would be removed more frequently on account of his age, without a sufficient appreciation of his services. If there should be, then, some method of employing this young man according to his means, and of training him, it would be something worthy of our approval.

Here, then, are two classes—the skilful workman, and the apprentice—tried merit, and youthful hope—for which some system of labour must be found, combining them both, and enabling them to produce all they can. This system has been in existence since the deluge, and our innovators have destroyed it, under the name of *marchandage*.

For example, a master, perceiving that an experienced workman takes ten days to finish a piece of machinery, gives it to him to produce by the piece. He paid him, at 5 francs a day, the sum of 50 francs; he gives him the job at the same price, leaving him the choice of time. The workman does it in seven days instead of ten, and earns upwards of 7 francs. He even consents to do it for 45 francs, for at that price he still earns about 6½ francs. But this is only the beginning of the system. Take the case of a workman still more expert — one who can construct the most complicated parts of a machine. His master will, perhaps, give him the cylinder of a steam-engine, worth 2,000 or 3,000 francs, or the carpenter's work in a large house, worth 5,000 or 6,000 francs. The practised eye of the workman soon judges what time and labour it will require; he agrees with his master for a fixed price, which assures him a profit, and then takes with him several workmen to his taste, or

some youths who, under his hands, will be worth more than they were under the master's, because he is with them, in the same workshop, tracing out the plans, while they are labouring with the plane or the file, and performs with their aid the work for which he had contracted. He thus earns 7, 8, or 10 francs a day, and finds means of granting additional pay to his fellow-workmen, so as to encourage them to labour. In an engine-factory, the founding-works are often confided to the enterprise of a principal workman, who, having under him a hundred assistants, can sometimes earn from 300 to 500 francs a month—that is, from 12 to 20 francs a day, reckoning twenty-five working days per month. This has frequently happened at the great foundries in Paris.

The master finds the establishment, the models, the moulding-sand, the fount, the coke—that is, all the capital. In the joinery, the master provides, in like manner, the workshop, a part of the tools, and the wood—that is, the capital. Moreover, in all these cases, the master makes an advance every week to pay the daily wages.

It is obvious that the part played by the piece-workman here is that of a small contractor, who, possessing merely his hands and his skill, but no capital, earns much more than he would have earned under day-labour, and reaps a benefit which is advantageous, not only to himself and his employer, but to his fellow-workmen too. He gains time, and adds to the power of production, which, viewed largely, must be an advantage to the community. 'You desire to see the workman rise by his own merit, and speculate, like his employers: here then,' says M. Thiers, 'is a very simple means, expensive neither to the master nor to himself. You wish him, in fact, to become a master in his turn: here is a sure and well-graduated means, for he ends by having ten, twenty, and even a hundred workmen under his direction. You wish him to share in the profits of capital: here is a certain means, for the workman who earns 6, 8, or 12 francs a day, without any risk, whatever may be the fate of his master's trade, is certainly a partaker in the profits of capital, without being exposed to share its losses.' And this, says M. Louis Blanc,* is

* *Organisation du Travail.*

'*l'exploitation de l'homme par l'homme*'—a kind of speculation in man, as though there were any means of making man compete with man, without the one gaining from the other—the contractor by the overseer, the overseer by the workman, and the workman by the labourer, all by all, but all according to their individual merit, unless an absolute equality of wages be desired, which supposes an equality of faculties, and especially of production, which would soon bring the whole body of workmen to work just as the idle and the clumsy do, instead of inducing all to labour as the most industrious and the most skilful. This, far from being an amelioration, would be an aggravation of the general condition of man; for the less food and clothing that is produced there is less for all, and particularly for those who occupy the lowest positions in the community. The abolition of piecework in France was, as M. Thiers justly designated it, a concession to the time-hands, who rarely obtained these piece-orders, because in general they were not thought capable of executing them. 'Jealous mediocrity,' he says, 'has been listened to, to the prejudice of the clever workman. I ought to say idle mediocrity, for laborious mediocrity often found employment with the *marchandeur*, and additional pay, when it inspired confidence in this best of all judges, since he made it work under his own eye. Here, as always, under the pretence of humanity, the good workmen have been sacrificed to the bad.'

The principal manufacturing towns of France are but a modification, in one form or other, of the capital, both as regards the character of the workmen, and the social and political views which they entertain. Paris is the hotbed, the forcing-house, of the industrial genius of France, and everything, as a consequence, is there in a comparatively artificial state. The workmen of Rouen, Lille, Saint-Quentin, and Sedan, however they may vary in other respects, have this in common with the workmen of Paris —they have a hankering after a new social *régime*, and a confused notion that their material interests will be benefited when such a *régime* shall be established. As

regards the material comfort of these populations, scarcely one will equal the present state of the best portion of our manufacturing towns, and some few of them are in a very depressed condition. Take this picture of Lille, for example, drawn by an unquestionably faithful hand:

With the inveterate habits of the Lille population (says M. Audiganne*), the lodging has but little influence upon the moral side of life. They are rarely at home, and if they had a palace to live in, they would very soon quit if it were denuded of company. The workmen form their separate circles in the numerous publichouses of the town, in which they spend all their leisure time, the green shutters of which are infinitely more agreeable than the tawdry red blinds of the *guinguettes* in the suburbs of Paris. The *cabaret* is not only a place where the working-man can drink—nay, can get drunk too often—but where he can form part of a sober union. The same visitors habitually frequent the same houses; and sometimes the workmen in a shop levy a sou per week, to enable those among them to go to the *cabaret* when they think fit, without being obliged to take something to drink. The associations of the *Lillois*, as they are termed, are divided into two large categories—those who are under the influence of a religious idea, and those who are more or less removed from it. It is not, however, difficult to discover the struggle between them, of the spirit of Christianity on the one hand, and the spirit of Socialism on the other—a struggle, we do not hesitate to avow, which will form one of the most interesting pages of contemporary history. Socialism has found in the Gospel the ideas of equality and fraternity, but it has exaggerated their application on the theatre of life, and it will soon have to encounter Christianity as an irreconcilable adversary.

The following picture, equally true, but drawn with a gloomier pencil, will convey a more precise idea of the condition of the factory classes in several of the towns of France:—

Let us pass (says M. Louis Blanc†) to towns of the second rank. Dr. Guepin has written the following remarks upon Nantes: This being a town of a medium magnitude between the great seats of industry and commerce—such as Lyons, Paris, Marseilles,

* *Les Populations ouvrières* (Paris, 1859).
† *Organisation du Travail.*

Bordeaux, and the towns of the third class—and the habits of the workman being better there, perhaps, than anywhere else, we do not think that we can select a better example than it presents, to test the results at which we would arrive, and to give them a character of absolute certainty.

Without stifling every sentiment of justice, no one can fail to be afflicted at the sight of the enormous disproportion which exists between the enjoyment and the suffering of the working poor. To live with them is only just not to die. Beyond the morsel of bread which he requires for himself and family, and the bottle of wine which, for the time, may relieve him of the consciousness of his afflictions, the workman wishes for nothing, and aspires to nothing. If you wish to know how he lives, go down one of those wretched streets, to which misery as effectually consigns him as popular prejudice did the Jews to certain quarters in the Middle Ages. Stoop, and enter into one of those sewers open to the streets, and sunk below their level. The air is cold and damp, as in a cave; your feet slip upon the miry ground, and you are afraid of falling into the dirt. On each side of the passage, which is on a descent, and leads below the level of the common street, there is a gloomy, large, cold chamber, the walls of which run down with dirty water; and the only air it receives is through a pitiful window, too small to allow a passage for the light, and too rickety to be closed. Push open the door and advance, if the fetid atmosphere does not make you recoil; but take care, for the uneven floor is neither paved nor tiled, or the tiles are covered with such a thickness of filth that you cannot see them. There are two or three bedsteads mended with packthread, which scarcely holds them together, and the frames are wormeaten and rickety; a straw bed, a coverlid made of fringed tatters (which is rarely washed, because it is the only one), and sometimes a sheet or two, and a pillow. Here you have an inventory of the dormitory. As for cupboards, there is no need of them in these abodes. A spinning-wheel, and a weaver's loom, often complete the catalogue of furniture. As to the other floors, the chambers, though not so damp and a little better lighted, are equally filthy and miserable. It is there that, often without a fire in the winter, by the light of a rosin-candle in the evening, men work fourteen hours a day, for wages varying from 15 to 20 sous. The children of that class, as soon as they are able, augment the incomes of their family, by taking a part in a severe and brutalising labour, and pass their lives in the filth of the gutters: pale, unwholesome, emaciated, their eyes red, bleared, and eaten up with

scrofula, they cannot be looked upon without pain—indeed, you would say they were of another species from the children of the rich. Between the men of the faubourgs and those of the wealthy quarters, the difference is not so great; but a terrible shaking of the tree takes place—the most healthy blossoms ripen, but by far the greatest part fall to the ground. At twenty years of age, the subject is either vigorous or dead.

Returning, however, to the Lille workmen, who may be taken as a type of workers in a cotton-factory, we must do him the justice to remark, that he measured the events of 1848 justly, and at their proper value; but the agitation of that period has had its effect upon his mind, which is shown in the insubordination he occasionally exhibits, and the spirit of defiance which he too frequently shows to the foreman of the establishment to which he happens to belong. He suspects even any benefit which his employer may occasionally extend towards him, and this feeling has been mainly generated by the preachings of the Socialist.

The city of Amiens has made many efforts, and at various periods, to raise the rate of wages which are paid to certain portions of the manufacture of that town, but hitherto its efforts have been of little avail. The incident we are about to relate, however, throws an instructive light upon the rate paid to dyers in Amiens, and by reflection upon the rate paid to the same class of industry in this country. London, Manchester, Macclesfield, Coventry, and other seats of industry where the art of dyeing is practised, will contrast, we presume, favourably with that of Amiens in respect to wages paid to working-dyers. 'The head of a very large dyeing establishment at Amiens,' says M. Audiganne,* 'informed me that the workmen, finding their salary of 9 francs per week too low, demanded a rise to 12 francs per week. I was disposed,' said my friend, 'to accede to the demand, because trade was good at the time, if other master-dyers would do the same. But what did the workmen do? Having so easily received from me a favourable answer, they thought they could go further, and demand a reduction

* *Les Populations ouvrières.*

in the time. I resisted this new demand, and this circumstance offered a good opportunity to others to reject both propositions. After a great deal of controversy and delay, the affair terminated with a few firms granting 10 francs or 10 francs 50 centimes per week, instead of 12 francs; while several of them kept the wages down to 9 francs, so that the Amienese dyers were substantially defeated. Yet no *émeute* ever takes place in Paris but Amiens immediately follows the example, and has exhibited, upon more than one occasion, a spirit and audacity which are rarely exhibited in the most turbulent cities of France.

The workmen of Saint-Quentin differ essentially from those of Lille and other manufacturing cities in the North of France. They have not that spirit of association which peculiarly characterises the workmen of the latter city, but are more isolated and individual. They depend upon their work being constant, or by being succoured by charity, if it happen to fail; for the workmen of Saint-Quentin never dream of a crisis, or lay up for a rainy day. The *cabaret*, when outside the workshop, is the only place they know; yet they do not meet each other for company alone, but for drink, which, above all, is what they desire. Drunkenness is the great vice of this district. As wine is dear at Saint-Quentin compared to other districts, beer or alcoholic liquors of bad quality are ordinarily drunk, which brutalises, in a measure, the drinker. Under these circumstances the workman has little or no foresight, and he drifts down the stream of life with comparative indifference. Before 1848, the average rate of wages in the workshops of Saint-Quentin, taking men, women, and children, was from 20 to 22 sous per day; in 1848, under the influence of the Republican crisis, wages fell to 18 sous, but soon rose to 40 and 45 sous during the prosperous years of 1849 and 1850. Socialism did not, at the last Revolution, reveal itself in a prominent shape in the workshops of Saint-Quentin; yet it reckons numerous disciples among the workmen, some of whom have considerable influence over their fellow-men.

The Social principle has also taken root, to a considerable

extent, amongst the workmen of Sedan, which ranks next to Saint-Quentin in manufacturing importance. The mass, however, to speak the truth, know little more of the subject, as regards the theory and doctrines of *Socialism*, than the workmen of Saint-Quentin do; but they eagerly adopt it in their system of association, and entertain its vague aspirations. In no other city in the North of France are such striking contrasts to be found, looking at them from a moral point of view, as in Sedan. Drunkenness has been nearly extirpated, owing to the good sense of the people, and the firmness of the overseers in the factories. A drunken workman at Sedan is a curiosity. Family ties and family affections are consequently much improved, and the workman cultivates his bit of garden, which he rents at from 10 to 15 francs, outside the fortifications, whenever the season suits, in preference to wasting his spare time at the *cabaret*. On the Sunday, in summer-time, he takes his wife and children to his garden, where they dine and enjoy themselves in an innocent and temperate way; in the evening the family quietly returns home to their lodging, much happier, and much better prepared for the next week's work, than if the father had passed the whole day in drinking and smoking. The workmen of Sedan, however, as we have said, are somewhat deeply imbued with Social-communistic views. On this point, M. Audiganne* dilates as follows:—

On going to the bottom of things, we find in the Sedanese mind a trace of Louis Blanc's doctrine, mixed perhaps with a shred of the Fourierist theory—'Work the factories, after indemnifying the present proprietors, by associations of workmen:' at least this is the plan in the minds of the labouring classes, and to which all their ideas tend. Certain speculations, however, which were carried on upon a limited scale, according to the principles entertained by the Sedanese, had a tendency to shake their faith in Social doctrines. The workmen established a *grocer-society*, to supply themselves with groceries at something like cost-price. They appointed a chief, with a salary, to conduct the business; he purchased wholesale, and sold retail, at a little above cost-price, to pay the expenses of the establishment. This was the *Humanité*

* *Les Populations ouvrières.*

of Lille, on a small scale—simple in its operation, and not difficult to arrive at a good result. This establishment, as might be supposed, met with every sympathy, and presented a model for general imitation. This circumstance, however, alarmed certain parties, who provoked the opposition of the local authorities, and, on a certain day, the manager was arrested, accused of being a violent propagandist, and an unfaithful manager of the society's affairs. The papers and documents of the society were all duly examined, but no trace was found of propagandism: the books were in perfect order, and, as a consequence, the grocer-society and its chief had the entire confidence of the working-men of Sedan. The Sedanese pride themselves upon this little affair, and, perhaps, with a pardonable amount of reason.

Passing from French Flanders into Normandy, the other great northern district of manufacturing industry, we find a marked difference in the character of the working-classes. Here we have the workers in the factories, and the workers at home—steam *versus* hand-power—in juxtaposition in many parts of the Norman province. The Seine-Inférieure, and certain districts in the department of the Eure, represent the manufacturers proper: the remainder of the province is the classical ground of its old hand-industry. A comparison between the two classes of industry will develope some curious phases of character, which it may be as well for the moment to dwell upon.

Rouen is the chief seat of the cotton manufacture, and of cotton-printing also. The city still bears the mark, in many quarters, of the transition which has long been going on between the old and the new industry, not only in the habits, but in the morals also, of its people. This circumstance has been dwelt upon with considerable force by more than one of the economical writers of France, but by none with greater precision than M. Audiganne, who has faithfully analysed the Rouenese industrial population. That gentleman remarks:—

From the moment we become acquainted with the life and habits of the Rouenese, one afflicting circumstance is sure to attract attention—namely, the family of the workman is, in general, imperfectly regulated. It rarely presents that unity which

strengthens the ties of mutual affection, and a common success. Each member lives separate and alone, and the only union of the family is in meeting in the same lodging for meals. The moral tie is broken. The wife has no longer the position which she is entitled to hold, and which naturally belongs to her; she is more frequently treated as a servant than a companion, and sometimes with extreme rudeness. This abasement, perhaps, comes from working in the factory, which changes the mission of woman, from being wife and mother, into a simple cog, or wheel, in the mechanism of productive industry. This leads, naturally, to the early demoralisation of the daughters, in whom the respect due to a mother is quickly extinguished.

Concubinage is also of common occurrence; and we sometimes see a man, who has lived with a woman three or four years, and has a family of young children by her, abandon her to live with another woman, whom in her turn he also abandons. We notice these circumstances with regret, because, far from exciting reprobation from other workmen, they are treated with comparative indifference, which shows a moral obtuseness. The Rouen workmen have, in general, but little education. Amongst the adults, one-half of them scarcely know how to read and to write. In 1848, when the hands were idle, a great number were assembled in the factories, which were turned into schools, and some hundreds of young girls, of from 12 to 13 years of age,* had scarcely received the common rudiments of education. These young girls could not even sew, and the majority of them were pursuing a vicious course of life.

The working-man of Rouen is not more refined in his amusements out-of-doors than he is in his habits indoors. It is very rarely that he goes out with his wife and family for a walk outside the city; but, from habit, he spends the larger portion of his leisure time in *cabarets*, which are just as smoky and more crowded than they are at Lille. There is little discussion going on in these places at Rouen; the workman talks little, but drinks much, and the stupid silence of inebriety ordinarily prevails.

Since the Revolution of 1848, the Rouen workmen have occasionally shown a spirit of insubordination against their

* The Factory Act, in France, was passed in 1841. Children are admitted at 8 years old, and continue till 13 under the protection of the Act. They are allowed to work eight hours, from 8 to 12 years of age, and ten hours from 10 to 13 years of age. Night-work is not permitted to children under 13 years of age.

employers, of a rather violent character. Prompt to suspect, the workman believes he is always the victim of deceit, and there is no eradicating the thought from his mind. One of the most dangerous *émeutes* of recent times in Rouen, was that which took place in the Faubourg Saint-Sever, the working-men of which joined those in the country, who were stimulated by the same feelings. After quitting the factories, they let loose their evil passions, and dragged through the streets two manufacturers, with bare feet, and a rope put round their necks, as though they had been common felons. The better-informed of the people of Rouen, happily, put an end to the disgusting and degrading scene, otherwise the consequences must have been deplorable. This *émeute* arose out of the question of wages, and the men who engaged in it were the mere tools of certain political knaves, and the victims of their incapacity to comprehend aright the position which they held towards their employers.

The Workmen of Alsace.

If the grand object of art is to make the useful ornamental, and the ornamental useful, especially as regards the manufacture of textile fabrics, in no place in France has that object been more fully displayed and more beautifully extended than in the province of Alsace. It is from this province that emanate the exquisite cotton-prints which adorn and beautify the shops of European capitals, and are in periodic demand throughout the civilised world. Science and art, as applied to production, never perhaps exercised their magic powers to greater effect than they do upon a piece of first-class cotton-print, which has passed through the workshops of Mulhouse; and the names of Koechlin, Schlumberger, and Dolfuss, as the heads of the leading houses, are as duly recognised as are certain familiar names in the more elevated arts of sculpture and painting.

In the province of Alsace, there are upwards of 100,000 hands employed in the different branches of

the cotton-printing trade. In cotton-spinning there are about 20,000 hands; in the manufacture of cotton cloth about 50,000; and in the printing of cotton and its subordinate industries, there are about 20,000 hands. There are also the manufacture and the printing of mousseline-de-laines, and some ironworks. The population is mixed, half-French and half-German, many of whom are strongly imbued with Socialistic notions, as regards property and labour. Zornoff, Munster, Guebwiller, and Wesserling belong to the same province, and pursue similar branches of industry.

Mulhouse has sprung into existence as a manufacturing town since 1798, when it was joined to France, and incorporated in the French Republic. The population increased 60 per cent. between 1800 and 1810, 75 per cent. from 1820 to 1830, and doubled itself in the ten years which followed the Revolution of July 1830. During the years 1849–50, when trade recovered itself after the Revolution of 1848, the number of hands increased considerably, both in the cotton-printing and in the iron trades, and have been gradually but slowly augmenting since that period.

The labouring population of Mulhouse is a mixed race, being mostly driven to that centre from the surrounding districts for want of employment. The printers upon cotton fabrics generally belong to the town; the cotton-spinners are a nomad race from neighbouring departments, often dragging after them numerous and destitute families. Situated near the frontier, Mulhouse, which abundantly supplies Switzerland with capital, receives from that country and from Germany about one-fifth of her working population, which becomes in the time of a crisis exceedingly burdensome. Women fill a large space in the factories, since the substitution of machine for hand-labour in the cotton manufacture. There is, however, a considerable difference in the moral culture of the stationary and the nomad labouring population; the latter, being somewhat loose, are obliged to quit the town when they cannot obtain work. Concubinage between the

French is rare, and marriages are pretty regular amongst the stationary working-classes. The lodgings, however, of these classes are not kept in a tidy manner, and the woman forgets the cleanliness which is traditional on the borders of the Rhine; while on Sundays and on holidays, the family seldom quits the *cabaret*, which is generally annexed to a bakery.

Amongst the various associations of Mulhouse may be mentioned a Food Society, or *Société alimentaire*. In order to judge properly of the good this society aimed at doing, it is necessary to state that the working-classes were in the habit of getting goods from the butcher and the grocer on credit, and each one keeping a book in which the things were entered; and as those who buy on credit generally pay dear for what they have, the association endeavoured to obviate that evil by selling goods at nearly cost-price. The price charged for three meals per day ranged from the minimum of 35 centimes to a maximum of 65 centimes, whether consumed in or out of the society's premises. The detail of each meal will give an idea of the living of the working-people at Mulhouse, which appears to us to be exceedingly low, as compared to that of similar classes in this country. The food at 35 centimes was only intended for women and children, and comprised a breakfast (bread and coffee), 10 centimes; dinner (soup, vegetables, and bread), 15 centimes; supper (soup), 10 centimes. Food for 65 centimes: breakfast, 10 centimes; dinner (soup, vegetables, meat, wine, and bread), 35 centimes; supper (meat, soup, and bread), 20 centimes.

The working-classes of Mulhouse, to whom both moral and material assistance has been liberally given, entertain the same feelings towards their employers, and towards society, as other labouring populations who are the prey of designing speculators; they have not always resented a war of labour against capital, but they have certainly refrained, though under continued provocation, from acts of insensate destruction in the manufacturing establishments, on several trying occasions.

The Workmen of Lorraine.

The manufacturing industry of Lorraine is somewhat varied, though not, in a single instance, upon so large a scale as that of Alsace. Glass, crystal, and wool, in almost all its applications, are the principal articles manufactured, the greater portion of which are exported, and find a ready sale both in this country and in the United States. Saint-Die, Schirmeck, Bar-le-Duc, Nancy, Mirecourt, Saint-Quirin, Cirey, Baccarat, and Saint-Louis are the principal seats of manufacture, and some thousands of hands are dependent upon them for a livelihood. Cotton-spinning is carried on at Saint-Die and Schirmeck, in the department of the Vosges, which, united, work from 140,000 to 150,000 spindles. The spinning is of a very inferior kind, as compared to that of Alsace, on the other side of the mountain range, and the hands are badly paid; but all kinds of labour are at the lowest point of remuneration in the department of the Vosges, and the means of living are of a corresponding character. At Bar-le-Duc cotton cloth is manufactured of a medium quality as compared to that which is made in Alsace; but, unfortunately for the workpeople, the articles of food are dearer than they are at Schirmeck, which has occasioned some severe struggles and bitter altercations between the men and their masters.

The truck system is also carried on at Bar-le-Duc, which aggravates the evils under which the workmen labour, and from which there appears at present but little hope of escape. The leading masters, it is true, have abandoned this system of payment; but the small masters, especially in the neighbouring district, still cling to it, in spite of the opposition of the men.

The embroidery of Nancy and the lace of Mirecourt employ (the one about 40,000, and the other nearly 25,000) upwards of 60,000 hands, but the daily earnings of this large number of workpeople are exceedingly small;*

* Fortunately, the price of provisions at Nancy and the surrounding district is ordinarily low; in 1857 butcher's meat was selling at 20 centimes per pound.

and, as regards their social condition, the Nancians occupy a low place in the moral scale. The population has far outstripped the means to afford them employment.

The manufacture of glass and crystal is carried on upon a rather large scale at Saint-Quirin, Cirey, and Monthermé. It is worked by a company, and nearly rivals the imperial establishment of Saint-Gobain. The three establishments employ from 1,500 to (occasionally) 2,000 workmen. The manufacture of crystal was borrowed from England about sixty years ago, and has made rapid progress in France since its establishment. 'In the midst of surrounding agitations,' says M. Audiganne, 'the population of these districts showed themselves much in favour of Socialism—more so, indeed, than the workmen of Alsace were, upon its first introduction to that province. Yet, in its most anarchical phase, and under its most violent aspect, Socialism has not materially endangered the salutary relations which exist between employers and employed in this highly industrious portion of Lorraine.'

The Workmen of Rheims.

Rheims is the seat of woollen manufactures, and employs from 30,000 to 40,000 hands in that branch of industry. These hands are not living within the limits of the city, but are spread over a radius of from fifteen to twenty leagues, having Rethell, a town of 60,000 souls, for its centre. The annual value of the wool consumed in the manufactory is estimated at about 50,000,000 of francs; and, although the establishments are not upon so large a scale as those of Alsace and Normandy, still they will enable from 400 to 500 hands to work from 5,000 to 6,000 spindles. All the spinning is done in factories, whilst all the weaving is done at home by the weaver, there being no instance of a loom worked by steam-power in that district. There is, however, a middleman or factor, as he is commonly called, who steps in between the

master and the workmen. This middleman, having collected the work done during the week, goes with it to Rheims every Saturday, and takes back the master's orders to the workmen for the following week. For this service the middleman deducts a certain sum from the workmen's wages, amounting sometimes to nearly half, if the deductions be made from the sum paid for the commonest tissues. He is therefore, as middlemen too frequently are, considered more in the light of an evil than a good, and is distrusted accordingly by the workmen.

The average wages of a workman at Rheims is about 600 francs per annum, if he work in a large establishment; if at his own house, about 400 francs. The introduction of improved machinery has, therefore, greatly benefited the more advanced and more energetic of the working classes in that city and the surrounding neighbourhood; and as time wears on, the Rheims woollen-worker, who clings to his cottage machine, will as effectually die off as the poor handloom-weaver has done in this country, since the disciplined labour of the factory, and the skilled machinery by which it is effectually directed, was first introduced amongst us. As regards the moral *status* of the workmen of Rheims, M. Blanqui* observes :—

Their moral education has been sadly neglected, and they have, consequently, no power to resist the suggestions of certain political agitators, who are always dinning in their ears the grievous wrongs they have to endure. In 1848 the workmen of Rheims gave themselves up, body and soul, to the most dangerous influences. In no other city of the north, nor of the east, of France were there such menacing demonstrations as in Rheims. They set fire to a large factory, just erected with every improvement in machinery, and which might have afforded employment to some hundreds of hands; but they had not the sense to see that it is much easier to reduce a machine to ashes, than it is to destroy the thought and power that constructed it. A small number of individuals, recruited from the dregs of the people, were at the head of this savage execution; but those whose duty it was to prevent such an outrage, looked on with comparative apathy, and let destruction take its course.

* *Des Classes ouvrières en France.*

And, as a specimen of the intelligence of the Rheims working-men, M. Blanqui cites the following *affiche*, which was stuck on the walls of the city and in the workshops of both town and country:—

Government must grant—1. The immediate convocation of all citizens of 21 years of age, and their enrolment into a national guard; 2. The discharge of the garrison; 3. The suppression of caution-money of the journals; 4. The fixity of the price of bread at 75 centimes the 3 kilos; 5. The prompt suppression of all monopolies in grain; 6. Suppression of the 'book' (*livret*); 7. Abolition of the octroi; 8. Diminution in the price of lodgings; 9. A partial suppression of the high clergy, and a notable diminution in the appointments of the great dignitaries; 10. Abolition of the system of education put in practice by priests and kings, which tends to destroy, physically and morally, human dignity, and the substitution for it of a *régime* of fraternity and equality.

The Workmen of Lyons.

The workmen of Lyons are *sui generis*—a great exception to all other bodies of workmen in France. Lyons is a city of weavers, whose industry is exclusively confined to one material—silk. Unlike other cities in which weavers abound, Lyons, however, has no great factories, no gigantic workshops, in which is to be heard the unceasing whirr of machinery, and in which production is regulated with mechanical force and precision. The discipline and regularity of a mill are unknown to a Lyonnese weaver; he therefore works intermittently, and just as his fancy inclines him—with this only restraint, that his work must be completed at a certain definite time, however regular or irregular he may have worked during the interval of the taking-out and the taking-in of the work.

There are no manufacturers, properly speaking, at Lyons; but there are agents, who receive orders from the different houses who deal in silks, whether in France, in Europe, or in America. These agents choose the designs, and furnish the

raw materials for their manufacture, the weaver completing the work. Many of these weavers own five or six looms, which are set up in their own houses, at one of which they usually work, and let the others to weavers, who are mostly nomad, and are generally seeking work from the *entrepreneur*, as the five or six-loom weaver is termed, to whom the nomad weaver pays a tax for the hire of his loom. The foreman and the weaver are then upon a footing of perfect equality, and it would seem, at first sight, that nothing could disturb the harmony that existed between them. So far, however, is that from being the case, that no manufacturing city in France has for the last half-century been afflicted with such terrible dissensions as Lyons has witnessed; and no city certainly has created greater difficulties for the solution of the economist and the statesman, however practical or profound either of them may be.

'The city of Lyons,' writes M. Blanqui, 'was the first arena in which the genius of disorder fought his first battles—the commencement of that terrible encounter which, it is hoped by a certain class, will end in *Socialism*. Three times, in less than twenty years, the streets of Lyons have ran with blood, and order was only restored by the aid of military force. Civil discord, of the most savage character, has more than once cursed this city, whose industry is the pride of France, and the envy of the world. Of its 250,000 inhabitants, Lyons reckons about 40,000 weavers, or workmen connected with the weaving of silk, who are superintended, as it were, by 500 commission houses, the heads of which bear the name of manufacturers. There are about 130,000 looms applied to the manufacture of silk in France, which produce a value of nearly 300,000,000 francs, of which Lyons claims from 180,000,000 to 200,000,000 francs. The exports of silk comprise more than half the manufacture, and fully absorb three-fifths of what is produced at Lyons.

The silk manufacture of France has always ranked amongst the most perfect branches of modern industry, and has hitherto given that country a commanding influence over the markets of the world, as regards the

consumption of that beautiful fabric. The quality of the raw material produced by France is almost unequalled; she carefully attends to its cultivation, by supplying the silkworm with wholesome food, and by carefully keeping it in a healthy condition. The results are as stated, for the raw silk of France is the finest and, perhaps, the most flexible of any that is cultivated. The silks of Italy, from which France borrowed the art of rearing the silkworm, and from which we derive the very terms which designate the different stages of its manufacture, is not so carefully reared as is that of France, and therefore does not realise quite so high a price, although the difference between them is not very great. In addition to growing the finest and cleanest raw material, France has long directed her highly-cultivated taste, both as regards the combination of colours and the beauty of design, to almost every branch of the manufacture of silk: hence we find the fabrics of Lyons in every capital of Europe, and always purchased with avidity by the highest class of consumers.

Yet, notwithstanding these advantages, France will have some difficulty in maintaining her supremacy in this walk of industry; indeed, she begins to feel her power slightly declining, for her exclusive *rôle* now is to make for the *élite* of consumers, while her greatest and most successful opponent (England) has the millions to supply, which is infinitely preferable. 'The time is not far distant,' says a highly intelligent writer, and who is well informed on the subject about which he is writing,* 'since France had the monopoly of the manufacture of silk. People came from all parts of the world to purchase the productions of Lyons, St. Etienne, Nismes, and St. Chamond, both figured and plain, whether of the richest or of the medium quality. Unfortunately, the field of industry requires constant and vigilant attention, and with all our energy we have competitors as it were upon our own ground; for England, Switzerland, Belgium, Prussia, and Italy even, have entered the arena against us. But it is from England that we have most to dread, for she draws from her vast and widely-extended colonial possessions the raw material

* *Annales de l'Industrie de la Soie en France.*—Raspail.

in such abundance, and at so much cheaper a rate than we can command, that the most fatal rivalry is to be expected from her. There are different means, it is true, of producing cheaply—the perfection of machinery being one, and the excellence of workmanship another. Both these means we possess—the one superior perhaps to our neighbour, and the other equal, we will say; yet the most important of all is the abundance and cheapness of the raw material, for it is impossible in the long run to sustain the struggle for supremacy, or even equality, unless we are placed upon a par with our competitors in these several respects.'

England has a manifest advantage over her competitors in the manufacture of silk, from the facility with which she can procure the raw material. She has made Europe, in a great measure, subservient to her in this respect. The sources whence we principally draw our supplies are China, India, Broussa, Italy, Greece, and France. At the present time we have nearly the exclusive supply of China and Bengal silks, which comprise a large portion of the quantity annually consumed, and which also, from their lowness of price, enter largely into the manufacture of mixed and low-priced fabrics—always the great *desiderata* with manufacturers. England, besides, has shipping in the Eastern Archipelago, ready at all times to drop in at all places to bring home a return-cargo, having generally taken a profitable one out. Neither the French, nor any other European people, have the power to do this: hence England has become—what Huskisson, in 1825, predicted she would be—the emporium of raw silk. Therefore, whether the foreigner requires a Bengal silk, worth from 9*s.* to 14*s.* per lb.; a China silk—the most useful of all for general purposes of manufacture, having a good *nerve*, and being white in the gum, by which it is capable of receiving better than yellow gums, whether French or Italian, the dye of the most delicate colours—worth from 12*s.* to 22*s.* per lb.; or a Broussa silk, coarse and negligently cultivated, though white in the gum, worth from 12*s.* to 18*s.* per lb., he is dependent on us for a supply;

while Italian and French raw silks are as open to other nations as they are to ourselves, with this single abatement, that we are the largest consumers of Italian silk, as we frequently run it thread-and-thread with a low-priced Bengal, which materially reduces the price of the raw material when simply in a thrown state, and which enables us, in some measure, to control the market. Italian silk is worth from 27*s.* to 29*s.* per lb., while French silk—being equally fine, but ordinarily speaking cleaner, from the worm receiving nicer attention—generally sells at from 1*s.* to 2*s.* per lb. higher than Italian. The great bulk of the raw silk produced by France is consumed in her own looms, and is exclusively applied to the highest class of goods.

The manufacture of Lyons is now, and has been for some time, menaced with two evils, which are almost inseparable. One is the want of sympathy between employer and employed, and the other is the misunderstanding between the weavers of the town and the weavers of the suburbs, which has for some time prevailed. The latter, finding themselves ground down by the increasing dearness of lodgings, by the octroi duties, and by the comparatively high price of provisions, have by degrees formed in the environs of Lyons a rival colony to the weavers in the town; and, though they receive a little lower wages for weaving, they are better off, on account of the cheapness of things outside as compared to what they are inside the barrier. There is, consequently, two different prices for weaving the same article in the department of the Rhone. The weaving of a *mètre* of velvet, with the same number of shoots to the inch, for example, will be paid one-fifth less outside than inside the barrier; and as the price of weaving, like most other industrial pursuits, is ordinarily regulated by the lowest paid, the wages of the weavers inside the town are materially affected by the competition which their outside opponents carry on against them. This difference of wages has not only generated a great deal of ill-feeling between the weavers, but it has materially complicated the relations between the foremen

and the weavers, which previously were not of the smoothest kind.

Those who have visited Lyons will remember its peculiar and picturesque configuration. The muddy Soane, flowing lazily along until it joins its sister river—which, clear and translucent, pursues its rapid and 'arrowy' course *en route* for Avignon and the Mediterranean —before arriving at its confluence with the Rhone, is suddenly arrested by a high mountain range, at the base of which is a plain, about a mile and a half in length, forming a kind of peninsula, upon which Lyons is mainly built. A good portion of the town, however, called the weavers' quarter, is built upon the sides of the mountain, and it is a curious sight to see the weaving structures perched here and there, more like eyries for eagles than dormitories for human beings. Lyons is surrounded by independent faubourgs, which have the privileges of communes, and which contain about a third of the working population. There are the suburban communes of Croix-Rousse, La Guillotière, and de Vaise, which join the city at three different points. The faubourg de Vaise and the quarter Saint-George, suspended on the abrupt declivities of Fourvières, command the course of the Soane; that of Guillotière commands the course of the Rhone and the turbulent quarter of Croix-Rousse, which alone finds space for about 20,000 inhabitants.

Those who have the curiosity to visit the weavers' quarter will have to ascend, occasionally with difficulty, immense flights of steps and some sharp inclines, cut out like stairs, before reaching the weavers' domicile. The surrounding aspect is certainly, in nine cases out of ten, highly picturesque; but enter the weaver's edifice, which is dirty in the extreme, and there you will see the machinery, if the term may be permitted, of the Lyons manufacture. Each weaver occupies an apartment, comprising two or three rooms—rarely more, often less—in each of which is fixed, close to the window, the Jacquard looms; and in the room is generally a recess for a bed. In a corner of the apartment is a stove, which is used for

heating and cooking purposes by all the inmates. Sometimes the head of the family assigns a small room for his daughters, to keep them separate from his ordinary lodgers; but it is not uncommon to see ranged in a row the bed of the master, and the beds of the workmen to whom he lets his looms. 'This detestable habit,' says M. Blanqui,* 'generates a promiscuous intercourse, which breaks down every moral sentiment, or, at least, paves the way for an unrestrained indulgence in vice.'

Wages are generally low even for fashionable articles, though, of course, these are better paid for than are the ordinary run of goods. Take, for instance, a piece of silk of the latter class—a plain black silk. The weaver receives for this 70 centimes per *mètre*, and of this he can only make about four *mètres* per day, working from five in the morning to ten at night (which is about 3 francs), out of which he has to pay 1 f. 50 c. to his chief as rent for the loom. Certain other goods are better paid, but, taking the mass, the average is very low. Numerous women weave plain silks, and are treated on the same footing as the men; but in heavy work, where a great number of shuttles are in use, they have not strength sufficient to be employed. Apart, however, from the work done, there is a systematic method, on the part of the foremen, of diminishing the price to be paid for it, which ought not to be practised. This naturally creates a counter-effort on the part of the weaver, and the result is a constant advantage of the one over the other, which generates and keeps alive a bad feeling. The foreman, from his position, has unfortunately more power than the workman, and we regret to say that he too frequently brings it into play. The weaver of the faubourg, likewise, is often pitted against the weaver of the town, and, as the wages vary, altercations of a serious character occasionally arise. The first, for example, will accept 2 f. 50 c. the *mètre* for a piece of goods, while the latter receives 3 f. 25 c. for similar work.

* *Des Classes ouvrières.*

'When wages,' says M. Blanqui,* 'are thus reduced to the lowest point, those workmen who receive them have not the spirit to appreciate either their work or their position; they have neither the ability nor the impartiality to examine questions of great moral and political importance, but they readily become the victims of anger or of despair. They attribute their misfortunes sometimes to the manufacturer, and sometimes to society; and if an evil counsellor inscribes upon the flag of misery the sinister device, "To live by working or to die fighting," † these unfortunates precipitate themselves into the struggle and aggravate their lot, which requires years for its restoration.'

During the last thirty years or so, the tendency of public feeling in Lyons has been towards the severance of the two classes who represent the industry of that place. So long as that industry had scarcely a rival in the world, no cloud interposed its shadowy darkness between the masters and the workmen; and profits, though unequally divided, did not the less suffice the whole community; and simple journeymen were often seen to rise to the head of the workshop, through the exercise of good order and economy. These in their turn, after realising a certain amount of capital as owners of looms, rose to the position of masters and overseers. But when a series of crises began to attack the lucrative industry of Lyons, as was frequently the case—sometimes by greatly diminished orders, or by the sudden rise of a tariff—the workmen experience at once not only a fall of wages, but a diminution in the demand for their labour. Hence differences arose between the employed and the employers, and the line of separation has been gradually enlarging, instead of diminishing, since the period we have mentioned.

The masters, however, wished to lower prices, so as to be able to compete in foreign markets upon fair ground; the men refused to accept wages which, they alleged, were

* *Des Classes ouvrières.*

† '*Vivre en travaillant ou mourir en combatant*'—inscribed on the banners of the Lyonnese when in a state of insubordination.

inadequate to satisfy their ordinary wants. A sullen conflict was the result: at first singly, and confined to certain classes of workmen, but ultimately it became collective, and so thoroughly organised as to include the whole trade. Its character was shown in the events which followed the adoption of the tariff by the masters, imposed upon them in 1831. The masters, &c., formed a protective association, numbering about 3,000, under the title of *Mutuellistes*; and the men, numbering about 15,000, took the name of *Ferrandiniers*, which was derived from *ferrandine*, the name of a silk formerly made at Lyons. The object of the men was to secure a fixity of wages by the force of numbers, which they deemed equal to power, but neither their masters nor the Government took the same view of the matter.

Things, however, remained quiet for a time, but the materials were of too inflammable a nature not to take fire at the slightest collision. The Government, unfortunately, made an impracticable treaty, which they were obliged to abide by, and a collision, in consequence, soon took place, which quickly assumed the proportions of a civil war. Lyons fell, for a moment, into the hands of the workmen; but that victory simply proved how utterly futile armed conflicts are to settle questions of labour. The scission, however, brought the Government, which, up to that period, had disagreed with the masters, into open collision with the working-men, who endeavoured to come to terms, and had asked the Government to mediate between them and their masters. The Government refused at once to fill the *rôle* of mediators, but hastened to fortify the city, leaving, at the same time, the chiefs of secret societies in Lyons to direct public opinion as they liked upon industrial questions, which in their hands soon became political questions. The *Mutuellistes* and the *Ferrandiniers* were quickly absorbed by associations, which sprung up in every direction throughout France, and formed the *nuclei* of those turbulent and dangerous bodies which were mainly paralysed in 1848. These societies, however, produced a second insurrection in Lyons in 1834, which was suppressed

with terrible severity; yet the workmen of that city still cling to the idea that it is by physical force alone that they can ameliorate their condition, and solve the great economical questions which are involved in it. But competition in neutral markets, the indirect cause of the alteration in the Lyonnese manufacture, is daily growing in strength, and the workmen of that city must submit to an industrial conflict with the foreigner, however it may be brought about, or whatever may be the results.

But the foreign manufacturer is not the only opponent that the Lyonnese have to contend against. Competitors are springing up at home, and in the immediate neighbourhood, which they will have to meet in the industrial arena, without the slightest favour. Water-power is already applied to the weaving of silks in the neighbouring departments of the Rhone, the Ain, and the Isere; and though some efforts have not succeeded in applying steam-power to the same purpose, there is every prospect of their being repeated, and success then is only a question of time. The advice, therefore, given to the Lyonnese workmen, by a friend and benefactor *:—

The Lyonnese workmen would do better to enquire into the several causes of the periodical depressions of their trade, than by endeavouring to reform the human race. If they had studied those causes, they would have seen the folly of menacing the rising industry of their fellow-workmen outside the barrier, on the ground that they are unfairly competed with, as though competition would injure rather than benefit their position. It would be the very thing to put them on a par with their fellow-workmen, for even octrois must occasionally give way to necessity, and migration is not an insuperable difficulty. Competition, in fact, is the sheet-anchor to which they must cling, if they wish to be equal with their competitors at home, and superior to their rivals abroad.† . . . There is no subject more worthy of meditation

* M. Blanqui: *Des Classes ouvrières.* M. Arles-Dufour: *Un Mot sur les Fabriques étrangères de Soieries.*

† Some of our readers will, perhaps, remember the conduct of the Spitalfields weavers some forty years ago, when they marched through the streets of London in a body to the House of Commons, and begged for a 'book' to regulate the price of weaving. Well, their prayer was granted; and what was the result? The trade left the metropolis, and

than the social and economical aberrations of which we have recently been the witness, and which have manifested themselves in certain quarters to an extreme degree. They appear to be regularly concentrated in Paris and its environs; at Rouen, and in the neighbouring valleys; at Lille, and in its faubourgs; but, above all, at Lyons, whence the evil has extended to Saint-Etienne, Clermont, Limoges, and the manufacturing quarter in the department of the Creuse. The spirit of disorder is strong in the great centres of industry, but violent and ridiculous in the surrounding neighbourhoods. The workmen of Lyons talk less but do more than those of Saint-Etienne, who are always noisy, rude, and undisciplined. So puerile, indeed, do their disputes occasionally seem, and to such extremes do they push their ill-founded and jejune theories, that at some moments they appear to have lost their senses.

The *Conseils de Prud'hommes* have, certainly, done a great deal to mitigate the evils arising from the disputes of the workmen and their employers at Lyons, and the organisation of that useful body is therefore deserving of careful consideration; but we must simply confine ourselves to a mere record of its judicious course of action, since it was first established as a tribunal for the settlement of disputes.

The Conseils de Prud'hommes.

The *Conseil de Prud'hommes* was first established in France in 1806. The necessity of organising a practical body of men, for the settlement of the disputes which frequently arose between employers and employed, was long felt in France; and certainly no tribunal could be more economically constructed, or could have given greater satisfaction, than the *Conseil*, as organised in France, appears to have done.

part of it took shelter in Sudbury, Norwich, Reading, and elsewhere, while the bulk of it migrated at once to Macclesfield and some of the neighbouring towns. When the weavers of Spitalfields had, unconsciously, achieved their ruin, they prayed the House of Commons to do away with the 'book;' but it was too late—the evil was done. It was not likely that the master would pay 8*d.* per yard for weaving a piece of four-single gros-de-naples, when he could get the work done, just as well and much quicker, at 6*d.* per yard at Sudbury, and other kinds of silk in proportion.

The construction of the council was modified by a decree of the 27th of May 1848, and it now consists of four masters and four men; and twenty-four, equally selected from each body, form a maximum. The council is elected by masters, foremen, workmen, and *compagnons* (tramps), who must be twenty-one years of age, and have resided six months in the district. The electoral body is divided into two separate assemblies, one comprising masters and foremen, and the other workmen and *compagnons*. The workmen are presided over by a *juge de paix*, and the masters by a deputy *juge de paix*. Each meeting proceeds to choose about three times the number that are required for the council, and a vote subsequently determines the election. The list of the candidates is transmitted to the mayor of the district, to be published; and after eight days of publication, the masters and men are again convoked, and proceed separately to examine the votes, and to determine the absolute majority. The assembly of the masters nominate the workmen as candidates, and the assembly of the men nominate the masters. In the event of two candidates obtaining an equal number of votes, the oldest of the two is preferred. If there be no objections raised to the elections, the sitting of the council is at once proclaimed; if there be objections, a *procès-verbal* is drawn up, and the sitting is postponed for eight days. The president and the vice-president are nominated for three months by the council, alternately occupying each other's place. The council is divided into two bodies—one for settling disputes, the other for judging disputes.

The following is a statistical statement of the decisions of the council at Lyons, which shows at a glance the great benefit the body confers upon the trade of that city, and the general advantage that must accrue to all connected with it, by the numerous decisions it is in the habit of giving, and the general satisfaction with which those decisions are received, both on the part of employer as well as of employed:—

Compte Rendu des Travaux du Conseil des Prud'-hommes de la Ville de Lyon, par M. Félix Bertrand, Président du Conseil, Années 1852–1853.

From the 10th January to the 31st December 1852–1853, the council held 306 public sittings, at which 8,541 cases were decided upon. These cases included every branch of the trade (silk) connected with Lyons, in which disputes have been frequent and vexatious, especially on the part of the workmen. The cases of dispute are thus divided:—

	1852	1853
Between masters and foremen . .	1,502 ...	1,416
Between foremen and workmen . .	1,023 ...	1,530
Between foremen and apprentices .	931 ...	1,302
Between foremen and winders . .	272 ...	565
Total . .	3,728 ...	4,813

The report concludes by stating that 'the absence of all appeal against the decisions of the council proves the satisfaction wish which they are received;' and the institution has fairly earned the high eulogium which M. Chevalier passed upon it—'une des plus nobles créations dont notre siècle s'honore.'*

* *Cours d'Économie Politique.*

CHAPTER XVII.

COMPARISON BETWEEN BRITISH AND FOREIGN LABOUR.

MANY attempts have been made, during the last quarter of a century, to solve the interesting problen as to the relative capacity, condition, and prospects of British labour and foreign labour. Tours at home and abroad have been undertaken for the express purpose, and the most minute enquiries have been made, and the most elaborate deductions drawn, in order to arrive at just conclusions upon this important subject. Little success, however, has hitherto rewarded the researches and the reasonings of those who have devoted their attention to it; and we must attribute their failure to their having either grappled with facts in order to extort from them a confirmation of some preconceived opinions, or their having weighed those facts by a false balance—for facts in political economy have very often a different weight from their apparent weight.

For instance, the relative capacity of British and foreign labour cannot be determined by reference to one and the same standard of excellence, for each has a standard of excellence of its own. Their relative condition cannot be determined by reference to the remuneration which they respectively receive; for even the relative amount of the remunerations which they *really* receive cannot be determined simply by the nominal amount of money-wages which they receive, but depends also upon their own relative real value or *productive power*, and also upon the relative value of money measured by the sumptuary commodities which the same amount of money will command in different countries. And lastly, as to the prospects of British and of foreign labour—regarding them as competitors—

nothing can be more fallacious than arguing from the present to the future, or rather concluding the future from the present. Each particular Government can do much for the future condition of its working-classes; and that Governments are not *ex-officio* wise is evident from the fact, that no two Governments in the world are as yet agreed upon what is the wisest course to pursue for this end. One says free-trade, another protection, a third prohibition, and so forth, through all the shades between cosmopolitanism and exclusiveness. And, further, the future condition of the working-classes of each country depends even yet more upon themselves; and the present aspect of the civilised world renders it impossible for those best acquainted with the narrow jealousy and the liberal feelings, the dread of competition and the contempt of rivalry, and all the other contradictory passions which change of circumstances evoke in the working-classes everywhere—it is impossible for the most acute observer of human nature to say, amidst such conflicting elements, what direction the irresistible will of the working-classes will take in any country, whether for their own good or evil.

Again, there is much confusion of ideas as to the causes of our great manufacturing superiority, and therefore there cannot be a very clear understanding as to the probability of its permanence. All are agreed that we owe it to national advantages of some kind or another. One says that we owe it to the insular character and geographical position of the country; another to the superiority of our machinery; a third to our abundance of mineral wealth; a fourth to our superfluity of capital; a fifth to the innate energy of the Anglo-Saxon race, and so on. Not one of these theories, standing alone, will explain the mystery of our manufacturing superiority, though combined together they will go far to explain it. In the just and well-selected language of Mr. Thomson, the first President of the School of Design at Manchester,—'The industrial supremacy of England is not due to, nor dependent upon, any one or two great causes, but on the rare union of many: skill, capital, fuel, machinery, and the extraordinary industry of our

people are the chief; and not the least is that *position* which these advantages have gained for us, as the market in which the greatest variety of manufactured articles in the world are to be found concentrated on a single spot, with unlimited powers of production, and with the means of immediate transport to any quarter of the globe.'

It will be seen presently, that there is another cause of our manufacturing pre-eminence, quite unconnected with those enumerated by the authority just quoted. In the meanwhile let us return, and first, to the relative *condition* of British and foreign labour.

Those who have travelled need not be told that the condition of the working-classes in any country must not be strictly judged by outward appearances. The Swiss operative apparently enjoys a greater degree of comfort than the English operative, and the English operative a greater degree than the French operative, but this does not prove that the rewards of labour in the three countries are on the same descending scale. As a proof of this, we may mention the following facts: That when a spinner's wages at Manchester were, according to a document drawn up by the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, from 20*s.* to 25*s.* a week, in the Canton of Argovia, in Switzerland, they were only 7*s.* 6*d.* a week, while in France the spinners in the large works at Guebwillers averaged 12*s.* per week. This was about twelve to fifteen years ago, and there has been little to affect these discrepancies since. The same proportions, as regards the nominal amount of *money*-wages, still obtain in the three countries; but, as we said at the outset, the actual amount of remuneration received depends not only on the nominal amount of *money*-wages received, but depends also upon the relative value of money, measured by the quantity of sumptuary commodities which the same amount of money will command in different countries. Now, antecedent to the repeal of the Corn Laws and the reform of our commercial tariff, the price of the necessaries of life in Switzerland was not more than one-half the price in England; and therefore Swiss wages, considering also that the Swiss

operatives usually live on their own freeholds, may be considered to have approximated to English wages. But a few years have made a vast alteration in their relative condition. The prices of provisions in England have, during the last quarter of a century or so, been reduced by 35 per cent., and the prices in Switzerland have advanced about 5 per cent. An algebraist, therefore, would have no difficulty in showing that if the English spinners and the Swiss were on an equality in point of wages, considered in reference to what those wages would purchase—say twelve years ago—the English spinners must now have the advantage of the Swiss spinners, to the tune exactly of 30 per cent. On the contrary, the prices of provisions have advanced in France, during the interval, about 2 per cent., giving the French operative a slight gain over the Swiss operative, and leaving him, in the progressive means of comfort, far behind the English operative. This exemplifies our assertion, that a Government can do much for the future condition of its working-classes. Switzerland had enjoyed all the benefits of free-trade for centuries, and therefore had arrived long ago at the maturity of her natural strength as a manufacturing and commercial people. England, on the contrary, had for centuries been crippled by the swathing-bands of Protection, and had not been allowed the free use of her limbs. Even under these circumstances, natural advantages, of which no country has so few as Switzerland in a mercantile and industrial point of view, enable us to keep up the condition of our operatives to the mark of the Swiss; and no sooner did our Government resolve that our industry and enterprise should be free too, than the condition of the English operative rose above that of the Swiss, as far as the *means* of comfort are concerned, in the proportion of nearly one-third.

Now, there is a certain class of *soi-disant* political economists, who would say that such a discrepancy of wages for any particular department of manufacturing industry cannot exist, as we described to exist between the wages paid for cotton-spinning in England and in Switzerland. They would assert, on the faith of their theory respecting *profits*

and wages, that capital could not endure such relatively high wages in England. But they would labour under a most egregious error, from not being aware of all the elements which enter into the great question of wages. There is something more in it than how many hours a man works; there is this in it also—how much does a man do in an hour? We will illustrate this by an example.

The wages of a cotton-spinner at Ghent, in Belgium, twelve years ago, were exactly the same as in France—about 12*s.* a week. How then could the English manufacturer compete with the Belgian manufacturer, the former having to pay 22*s.* 6*d.* a week? The answer is, that the energy of our operatives, the quickness of their hands, the heart-and-soul interest which they take in the work they are about while they *are* about it (or, in other words, the quantity of work which their almost *ferocious* industry can turn out in a given time), more than compensates the capitalist manufacturer for the superior wages *per day* which he gives. As an illustration, we quote the following passage from the late Mr. Thomson's instructive *Notes on Cotton Printing*, the more especially as we had the pleasure of accompanying that gentleman in his tour through Belgium, in order to make enquiries and gather information relative to the necessity of obtaining a law for the protection of copyright in printing on cotton, as well as in printing on paper, in this country:—

The Belgian workman (says Mr. Thomson*) has the reputation of patient enduring industry, which may be justly conceded to him; but it may be doubted if that vigorous activity which characterises the English workman above *all others* is to be found here (in Belgium). It does not meet the eye in surveying a large establishment; it is not to be found in the statements of the Belgian manufacturers themselves, nor in the public statistics of their industry. The productions of M. de Smet de Naeyer, M. de Hemptinne, and M. Voortman, loosely estimated, give an average of 300 pieces (printed) for each worker; but the estimate of M. Briavoinne,† founded on the total production of the country, gives only 116 pieces for each.

* Mr. Thomson employed upwards of 2,000 hands in his printworks at Primrose, near Clitheroe.

† *Sur l'Industrie Belgique.*

Mr. Thomson thinks that the average deduced from the data of the principal calico-printers of Ghent is probably nearest the truth — namely, 300 pieces per annum for each workman. But how many pieces will an English workman turn out of his hands in the year —pieces requiring the same workmanship in every respect? Mr. Thomson tells us (and he speaks with a thoroughly practical knowledge of the subject), that the workmen in the employment of Messrs. Ainsworth & Co. turned out, at the same period, a *thousand* pieces per head annually. See, then, how the account runs. The English workman receives 22*s.* 6*d.*, on the average, per week— the Belgian workman 12*s.* per week. The wages, therefore, of the English workman are, to those of the Belgian workman, as somewhat less than 19*s.* to 10*s.* But the English workman turns out 1,000 pieces in the same number of days as the Belgian workman turns out 300 pieces, and therefore the work which the Englishman does in the week is, to the work done by the Belgian, as somewhat more than 33 to 10. Which has the advantage— the English calico-printer, who pays high wages, or the Belgian calico-printer, who pays low wages? It is easy to see from this data that the high-priced labour of the English workman is cheaper than the low-priced labour of the Belgian workman, in proportion as 43 is less than 80. Nor is this all. The *machinery* of the English manufacturer also is working, and making a return for the capital invested in it, with the same comparative rapidity; so that, on the whole, the cost of production, by man and machinery together, cannot be to the English calico-printer more than one-half of what it is to the Belgian calico-printer. But, as this is a very important part of our subject, we will endeavour to elucidate it, not only inferentially, but experimentally.

Several years ago, there was a general impression that it would be impossible for us to sustain our manufacturing pre-eminence against the cheap labour of the Continent, which was supposed to be cheap simply because it was, in comparison with English labour, cheaply fed. Our capital and machinery, it was said, had alone enabled us to carry

on the contest so far, and that we had better abandon it in despair whenever it should come to pass that the foreigner found himself, in respect of capital and machinery, on an equal footing with us. The *cheap labour* of the foreign operative, it was positively concluded, would then decide the struggle for superiority against us. So deeply were even our own manufacturing capitalists affected with this apprehension, that some of the most noted for forecast and enterprise withdrew themselves and their capital to those regions of cheap labour, taking also with them the best operative English skill they could obtain, to instruct and superintend it. Amongst others who thus (wisely, as it was thought) anticipated the shipwreck of our native manufactures, Mr. Cockerill, a gentleman of vast capacity and ample resources, was the foremost. He took into partnership with himself no less a personage than a foreign potentate, and we cannot relate the result of the speculation so well as in the graphic words of the author of *Notes on Cotton Printing*:—

> The history of an establishment at Andenne, on the banks of the Meuse, near Liege, pours a flood of light on the position of Belgium, and its capacity for competing with England. Mr. Cockerill and the King of Holland founded there a print-ground, after the latest and most approved fashion, with English machinery and English managers and system, and all the resources which could be derived from the knowledge and experience of Lancashire. This establishment existed some years before the Revolution of 1830, at which time the King of Holland's share was transferred to the Belgian Government. For some time the demands of the minister for funds in aid of the *prosperous* and *flourishing* manufactory at Andennes were granted by the Belgian Chambers, but not without reluctance and suspicion: repeated calls at last produced resistance, and, when the concern was finally wound up, it was found to have been pursuing *a ruinous trade* for many years. Such was the result of an attempt to rival in Belgium, by English modes and English management, the productions of English cotton-printers at home. That establishment, after a long inactivity, is now a paper-manufactory.

In fact, it was principally the Belgian *cheap labour*—cheap in name only, and, as we have endeavoured to show, in reality twice as dear as English labour—which ruined

the concern. Mr. Cockerill and his royal partner did not lack capital to give the experiment a fair trial; they availed themselves of the best English manufacturing machinery—a subject upon which no man living was better informed than Mr. Cockerill himself—of the best English processes, and of the best English skill to be procured for directing them; and yet, from the first to last, their competition with England was a ruinous one. English capital, English machinery, English system, English knowledge—they had every element, as far as manufacturing is concerned, of English success but one—the energy and activity of the English workman. This establishment fell to the ground because Mr. Cockerill found, by experience, that English labour was in reality the cheap labour after all, inasmuch as the English workman proved that he did more than three times the work of a Belgian workman for less than twice as much pay.

It may be said that the incapacity of manufacturers in Belgium to compete with English manufacturers is also partly owing to another cause—namely, to the vast market which our manufacturers possess at home. This is true: and, though it may derogate a little from the pretensions to superiority which our operatives might found upon the failure of the Andenne establishment pitting the cheap labour of Belgium against theirs, it indicates something very promising for their future prospects. No country can carry on a large export trade in any branch of manufactured commodities—that is, carry on a successful competition with other countries in third markets—unless it has a large demand for those commodities at home. The cost of manufacture always decreases, as the quantity manufactured is increased; and the manufacturers of England having a demand for their productions *at home* far greater than the manufacturers of any other country have for theirs, England has within its own bosom a most important element of cheap production which other countries have not.

The home-demand of England for her own manufacture was sufficient to establish her manufacturing pre-

eminence during a long course of years, when the consumption of them was most seriously restricted by the high prices of the first necessaries of life. With the masses, the belly must be satisfied before any thought will be taken of the back; and small indeed, in the palmy days of the Corn Laws, was the surplus left to them for their comforts and decencies after their bare animal wants had been supplied. But the cost of all commodities having been reduced *one-third*, their power of purchasing has been increased fully *one-half*. Thus, take an agricultural labourer earning twelve shillings a week, and expending formerly the whole of it on the necessaries of life. He can now purchase the same quantity for eight shillings, and have four shillings over, for which again he can purchase as much as formerly he did for six shillings—that is, he can now purchase half as much again as he did before the cost of necessaries was reduced. This must place him in a position of comparative comfort, and enable him to devote a surplus to the clothing of his family, &c. Here, then, a new *home*-demand springs up for manufactured commodities, still further to reduce the cost of manufacturing them, and, consequently, still further to increase the *foreign* demand for them.

We have purposely selected Belgium as a test by which a judgment is to be formed of the relative capacity and future condition of British and foreign labour, because she has greater advantages for carrying on a competition with us than any other country on the Continent. The Belgian workman is remarkable for his steady and enduring industry; he is, moreover, a skilful workman; the geographical position of Belgium is favourable for exporting her manufactures, and she is the most favoured by nature of all continental nations in the matter of fuel; and yet an exceedingly high protective tariff could not keep the English competitor out of her own market. The cotton manufacturers of Belgium have confessed all this. 'Take the trouble,' they said, in the remonstrance to the Belgian Chambers, 'to reflect on the situation of this manufacture, and you will recognise this singular and, at first sight, inexplicable fact.

We are as skilful as our foreign competitors; the topographical position of the country is advantageous; in certain respects we can work with as much economy, and even more than the manufacturers of foreign countries; and yet, if no change is made in the actual state of things, it is decidedly impossible for us to sustain this competition.' And the master-manufacturers in every continental state have even more reason to complain. The money-rate of wages, as at Elberfeld, in Prussia, is far higher; coal is dearer, transport to the ports of shipment more expensive, and the duties upon everything employed in the process of manufacture higher. Well might M. Bockmühl, of Elberfeld, say to Mr. Thomson, 'that with all their disadvantages, you will readily grant that we absolutely give up all idea of competition with the manufacturers of England on equal terms;' and in third markets, of course, the Prussian manufacturers must meet the English manufacturers on equal terms, or not at all.

And let it be remembered that these *third markets* are of rapidly-growing importance. The inhabited area of the world is largely expanding. New communities (that is, new markets) are daily springing up, in the hitherto desert regions of the New World in the West, and in the traditionally fertile islands of the Old World in the East; and European rivals can never meet the English manufacturer and operative there, as long as they cannot afford to meet us in their own markets without protective duties on *our* commodities, which are nothing less than state bounties on *theirs*.

But it has been and *is* said, that the rude energy of the English workman will, in the long run, prove no match for the exquisite taste of his foreign competitor. Now, if it were a necessity—a law of nature, in fact—that things should for ever continue as they are now; that the Englishman was ordained to excel in what is useful only, and the Frenchman (for instance) in what is ornamental only, we would not exchange the Englishman's lot for that of the Frenchman. The *useful* is for the many, and in a very great measure for *all*—the ornamental is only for a few,

and we would much rather have the supplying of the former than the supplying of the latter. But there is no such necessity, no such law, no reason whatever, why the Englishman should not acquire the Frenchman's *taste*, though there would be much more difficulty in the Frenchman acquiring the Englishman's energy. What *is* taste? Let us endeavour to define it, and then see whether Englishmen are disqualified, by any natural impediment or deficiency, from acquiring the gift 'on the same terms as the most favoured nations.'

Taste, we apprehend, is nothing more than a sense of the beautiful—a sense which is innate in no created being, but is acquired only by a *familiarity* with the beautiful. Why does the young painter or sculptor of every country resort to Italy as the finishing school of his artistical education? To improve his taste—that is, to refine his sense and enlarge his conceptions of the beautiful, by studying there the most exquisite works ever executed by mortal hands with the brush or chisel. The truth is, that the human mind is everywhere, in every stage of life, and under all social conditions, strongly endowed with the *faculty of imitation*—a faculty which is not peculiar to this race or that clime, but is universal. By this faculty the infant intuitively acquires a knowledge of the vulgar tongue, and the sage a knowledge of the stars. Newton saw that the apple imitated the example of all the countless worlds above and around us — hence his noble *Principia*, by which he was enabled to reveal all the mysteries of the visible heavens. Galileo was struck by the apparently isochronous vibrations of a chandelier from the ceiling of a chapel; his faculty of imitation was aroused, and he produced the *pendulum*. Copernicus watched a boy spinning a top, and observed that the top had two motions—one through space in a circular course, and the other round its own axis; and hence his imitative faculty led him to conceive that the same centrifugal and centripetal forces regulated the harmony of the whole firmament, and that the Creator, though omnipotent, had not been so wasteful of His infinite power as to make the sun perform daily round the earth

a course of more than six hundred millions of miles, instead of the earth spinning round its axis in twenty-four hours—a motion so slow at its centre as to be infinitely less perceptible than the motion of the gnomon's shadow on the face of the sundial. And philosophers like these—the great imitators of nature in her most sublime and stupendous operations—were not indebted for their discoveries to any mere ethnological peculiarities. There can be no doubt that Leibnitz and Newton both conceived, by analogical and analytical reasoning, the true *système du monde* at the same time, and without the possibility of any communication with, or piracy upon, each other; and the Grecian Ptolemy, through mistaken in his theory, evinced almost as much comprehensive capacity as the Englishman or the German. And if the most sublime walks of science *can* thus be trodden by all, without distinction of race or country, how can it be that the beautiful paths of art are not equally open to all? Nothing more can be wanted than an education to the beautiful—a familiarity with it. That the truthfulness of English work, speaking generally, has been as yet unapproachable, will be readily acknowledged; but it has been the fashion —perhaps too much the fashion—to decry the *taste* of the English workman. The execution and the *finish* of his work is admitted, but it is alleged that he is inferior in elegance of design. But this prejudice is gradually dying away.

There are certain reasons, however, for the superiority which our French neighbours have long enjoyed in this respect, and which it may not be uninteresting or uninstructive to allude to here. There is in France, as compared with England, so little employment for juvenile labour, that the rising generation has ample leisure for some preliminary instruction before it is summoned to the active duties of life. In and around all our great seats of manufacturing industry, a child can be put to some use, so as to contribute something towards the support of the family at a very early age; and hence we have found, and still find that, when grown up, they have acquired no accomplishments in the way of education, further than such as

enable them to read a newspaper and (with some difficulty) to write a letter. For the peculiar occupation to which they are destined they receive no preparatory education at all; they take to it, when very young, nothing more than their natural strength and mother-wit; and they grow up, for the most part, as little more than the motive power of the tools they are taught to use, or the tools of the motive power which it is their business to attend to. They thus become most expert workmen, and perhaps they owe a portion of their excellence in this respect to all their mental energies being concentrated in what may be called the manipulation of the task they are performing. To that task they daily apply themselves, without troubling their heads about how their labour might be abridged, or how the product of it might be improved.

But in France a contrary system is prevalent, arising from the different circumstances of the two countries. Children, as we have said, have there a few years for education before they are called to contribute to their own support, and the state has wisely provided that this education shall be such as will be of some service to themselves and to society in after-life. The art of design is a principal feature in it, though not to the exclusion of the ordinary rudiments of reading and writing; and thus it may be truly said, that the child is made the father of the man, for he acquires in childhood that which will be most serviceable to him in manhood, and which can rarely be acquired after the cares of manhood have begun, and the habits of self-satisfied ignorance have become confirmed. It is this early and appropriate education which renders almost every operative in France an *artist* likewise in the branch of manufacture to which he has been devoted. Hence he has a superior *taste for the beautiful* to what the English operative can boast, and the fruits of this elevation in the capacity and imagination of the French operatives are naturally observable in the greater delicacy or grandeur of French designs, as the occasion may require. We do not mean that French operatives universally supply the designs for the productions upon

which they are engaged; but when they do not, it is a necessary consequence of there being such *respectable* masters of the art of design, that those who make the art of design a profession, must be *very superior* masters of it indeed; and that the operatives themselves, from their capacity to appreciate the ideas of the designer, must be capable of interpreting and expressing them in the execution of the work more effectually than if they had no more sense of their beauty than the scene-painter, however expert in the use of his brush, may be supposed to have of the beauty of a Claude or a Canaletti.

The skilled artisan in this country will, however, always possess one great advantage over the artisan of any other—namely, the vast abundance of capital which in this country is always ready to avail itself of his talents. It will be said that the artisan has not found this to be invariably the case, but this seeming contradiction to the assertion is easily explained. Hitherto our artisans have had little more than mere manual skill to offer, and the capitalist has regarded them, according to the different branches of employment for which they are fitted, as being all so nearly equal to each other in this respect, that it has not been worth his while to make any discrimination between them. If he required a hundred hands, he went into the appropriate labour-market, and took those, out of the number competing for work, who were willing to work on the lowest terms. This practice is very injurious to the artisans as a body, for not only have the best been excluded from employment by the competition of the worst, but the rate of remuneration became fixed by what the very worst hands were willing to accept. This has arisen from the difficulty of discovering beforehand any difference in the value of the mere manual labour of individuals. The artisan has had nothing to offer to the competition of capitalists, for the competition has been the other way, manual labour competing for employment. But how different would be the case if the artisan was an artist also—one not only with hands to execute, but with a head to design! This would at once do away with the equality (assumed if not real) in the value of the services of all,

which has reduced all to the necessity of contending amongst themselves for employment; the strange principle of their rivalry for the notice of the capitalist being, not who can do the best work, but who will sacrifice himself for the worst wages? Let the artisan, we repeat, become an artist also (using that term in its broadest sense, for it admits of application to all industrial pursuits), and this would be done away with; for though there may be no difference between the value of one pair of hands and that of another pair of hands, there will always be a difference between the value of one man's intellectual gifts and those of another man. If then the artisan had not only a pair of hands but a head also to be employed, his situation would be most happily reversed. Instead of waiting in the labour-market for the chance of being the lowest bidder for employment, he would go to the capital-market to find the highest bidder for his services. Capitalists would then be the competitors for high-priced talent, and not artisans the competitors for low-priced work.

Again, the working-man who feels conscious of his superior skill, or manual dexterity, ought to depend upon his own worth as a labourer, and act upon his own judgment, and not permit himself to swerve from the straight line of his own interest, by the suggestions of the cunning, the clever, and the unscrupulous who belong to the same body. Let him abandon strikes and combinations; they are a premium upon incapacity, as we have said. Examine minutely their various workings, and mark their inevitable and uniform results: the able hand, who could always obtain work at good wages, is sacrificed to his comparatively feeble and inefficient colleague. All strikes therefore, with scarcely a single exception, are the sacrifice of the skilled *few*, to the presumed advantage of the indolent, ignorant, and indifferent *many*. Labour, then, if it wish to elevate its condition, must eschew combinations and strikes; it must endeavour to establish itself upon the same conditions as capital, and submit to the healthy and invigorating influence of competition, by which alone it can realise its best and most permanent interests.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TRADES-UNIONS.

TRADES-UNIONS are, in all probability, as old as the trades themselves. Like has been attracted to like in all ages of the world, and an *esprit-de-corps* amongst men following the same industrial pursuits in different countries, must have prevailed at the very earliest period of human intercourse. In early times the trades united for personal security, as well as improvement in their respective crafts; these purposes have been superseded by the progress of industry, by personal freedom, and by an improved policy of government. The great ends now sought to be attained by mercantile and operative unions, by capitalists, and by labourers, are the maintenance of a high rate of profit by the one, and a high rate of wages by the other.

The earliest examples of the unions of workmen are the trading guilds, or fraternities, which gradually spread throughout Europe, especially amongst its manufacturing and mercantile communities, remains of which still subsist in many of the leading towns of England and on the Continent. At an early period they formed a separate and favoured portion of the community, possessing exclusive grants and immunities. Combinations, in the modern sense, of workmen against their employers could have no place in these associations; each constituted a distinct incorporation of all those engaged in the same mystery or occupation; they were governed through bye-laws, which regulated the taking of apprentices, the admission of new members, the prices of their manufactures, &c.: in short, they performed all those functions in common, that are now performed separately by masters and journeymen,

and the only combination that existed was that formed by the union of both against the community. The monopoly thus established against the public was the cause of their downfall, and at an early period made them an object of legislative interference. In the 1st stat. 9th Edward III., it is declared that the franchises of guilds are prejudicial to the king, prelates, and great men, and oppressive to the commons. By the gradual abridgment of their privileges, they lost their municipal government; stranger-workmen were introduced into the trades, who did not acknowledge the authority of masters and wardens; and, finally, the fraternities resolved into two great and independent divisions of masters and journeymen—the former finding the capital, the latter the labour, for their co-operative industry. To this transition may be traced the first origin—the *fons et origo*—of trades-unions. They were banded together for the express purpose of keeping up the rate of wages, the workmen forming a distinct class, with interests frequently opposed to those of their employers, against whom they were sometimes compelled to act in concert, to prevent their social degradation.

The trading guilds, however, were useful in their origin, and only at a subsequent period became hurtful to the public interests. Their institution tended to foster and advance the manufacturing arts, which, without the co-operation of capital and skill they afforded, might have prematurely perished, or made a slow and almost inperceptible progress. In this respect they may be considered the germ of our commercial wealth and prosperity. But, though valuable as the nursery of national industry, they became an obstacle to its development after it had taken root; their exclusive privileges impeded its growth, through the power they afforded to punish intruders, to suppress competition, and keep the practice of their mysteries within the narrow limit of their own corporate interests.

The first notice of combinations of workmen is in the year 1548. The 2nd and 3rd of Edward VI. c. 15 of that year premises that 'artificers, handicraftsmen, and labourers have made confederacies and promises, and have sworn

mutual oaths, not only that they should not meddle with one another's work, and perform and finish that another hath begun, but also to constitute and appoint how much work *they shall do in a day, and what hours and times they shall work*, contrary to the laws and statutes of this realm, and to the great hurt and impoverishment of his Majesty's subjects.' In this there is no allusion to wages, but as the unions had been entered into to fix the quantity of work, and regulate the hours of working, the objects were of an analogous nature, and directed to the control of the labour-market. Subsequently, Acts were passed expressly to restrain combinations for raising wages. The frequent occurrence of statutes of this nature only serve to show their futility, for combinations multipled, and union and secresy were forced upon them by their illegal character. At length, in 1824, the entire system was abrogated, as we have remarked elsewhere; the Legislature discovered that laws to prevent the combinations of workmen, and not their employers, were partial and unjust; that, if successful, they could only tend to depress one class of the community at the expense of the other. The Act of 1824, therefore, repeals all laws previously made against combinations of workmen, to advance or fix the rate of wages, to alter the hours of working, to decrease the quantity of work, to induce others to quit, or to return to work, &c., provided no violence is used. In the following year this Act was amended, in conformity with its fundamental principle, of leaving workmen, individually and collectively, free in the disposal of their labour. With this view, provision was made for protecting workmen who did not choose to be members of any association, by which they were enabled, independent of any combination, to engage their industry on whatever terms, or to whatever master, they may choose, in perfect security against molestation, insult, or personal danger.

The ostensible and specific objects of trades-unions are as follow:—*First*, to oppose a reduction of wages, and maintain, according to a scale generally fixed by themselves, a fair remuneration of labour; *secondly*, to occa-

sionally demand an increase of the money-price of labour; *thirdly*, to endeavour to maintain the value of any particular industry, by laying down strict regulations respecting the admission and time of servitude of apprentices; *fourthly*, to prevent the employment of any but *union* workmen; *fifthly*, to regulate wages by the profit the employer may derive from improvements in machinery; and *sixthly*, to prevent the insidious reduction of wages by an extension of the hours of labour, or otherwise, without a corresponding increase of remuneration.

As regards the *first* rule of the unionists, we must respectfully observe that it is based upon an impossibility. These gentlemen are aiming at an object which they can never hope to hit. The ocean-tide ebbs and flows in unison with a great law, which no material power can arrest or direct, and the circumstances which determine the rate of wages are governed by a law as imperative as that of the tide. The unionists may oppose the reduction of wages, but what will their opposition amount to, if no artificial restraint be enforced upon the operation which regulates wages? The homely answer to this question is, when two workmen run after one master, wages fall; when two masters run after one workman, they rise. In more scientific terms, we should say that, 'the market rate of wages depends upon the ratio which the capital applied to the employment of labour bears to the number of labourers. If that ratio be large, the competition of capitalists must raise wages; if small, the competition of labourers amongst each other for employment must reduce them. Whenever the accumulation of capital is proceeding more rapidly than the increase of population, wages will be on the increase, and the condition of the labourers will progressively improve, until some check has been given to the increase of capital, or until the growth of population (naturally encouraged by high wages) has altered the relative proportion of capital to labour, and reduced the market rate of wages to its natural rate.

Secondly, the increase of the money-price of labour is

occasionally to be attempted. This is a more dangerous task than opposing a reduction of wages, for it must be borne in mind that every increase of remuneration quickly attracts new labourers, and renders the position of those who have obtained the advance extremely untenable. The cost, too, of struggling for an advance is much greater than that of opposing a reduction. An isolated case or two determines the latter, but the whole body of masters must be contended with in order to establish the former. Whether taken in detail, or boldly assailed in a body, unless the market justifies high prices, employers will not readily submit, and in either case the contest is long and doubtful.

Thirdly, the unionists endeavour to sustain the value of their particular mode of industry, by laying down strict regulations respecting the admission and time of servitude of apprentices. The old laws upon this subject, although professedly framed to secure the public from indifferently-executed work, which the liberty of purchasing, or refusing to purchase, was supposed not sufficiently to ensure, were in reality obtained in order to support the journeymen, and fell into disuse, and was afterwards repealed, because they restricted both masters and men. At an early period of our history, when the workmen were released from the semi-servitude which the guilds imposed upon them, this difficulty arose—namely: the men, as a rule, had a tendency to increase in number much greater than the increase of the fund which was appropriated to give them employment. Capital is always of slow growth, much slower than that of labour, which nature almost spontaneously produces. It is at all times, and in all countries (speaking of circumstances throughout the year), much easier to find a dozen stalwart labourers standing in the marketplace waiting to be hired, than to find one capitalist who will beckon them out to labour in his vineyard, or in his factory, or on his farm. In a prosperous and wealthy country like England, this condition of things is reduced to a *minimum*, for capital and labour are more equally adjusted; while in Hungary or in Ireland, where the order

of things is comparatively inverted, the labourer is rarely blessed with the sight of the capitalist, and is doomed daily to make the experiment of upon how little it is possible for a human being to exist. But even in this country, at the period we are alluding to, and almost up to our own times, the supply of hands was generally abundant, whether there was an expansion or a contraction of trade; and every scheme was adopted to lessen the number of workmen, and to keep them, in some measure, within the limits which the demand for labour naturally prescribed for them. The attempt to re-enforce the disused statutes on apprenticeships was a main object with the unions, and their want of success proceeded rather from a deficiency of power than the absence of a desire to recall the laws in all their ancient minuteness and oppression. The term of apprenticeship required varies, in different trades, from four to seven years, and in some the age of the party causes a relaxation of two years; but in all the pupil is required to be bound with the secretary of the society, and no back-bond, to shorten the term of servitude, nor any other modification is allowed. In almost every union journeymen are permitted to instruct their children, who by that means acquire the rights of apprentices.*

Fourthly.—The fourth duty of unions consists in the prevention of the employment of any but regularly associated journeymen. Without denying to the person who has not served an apprenticeship the power of belonging to the union, and preventing his obtaining work, the advantages of the confederacy to its members would be lessened, and the introduction into a trade of one willing to work at less than the ordinary price, who does not contribute to the common fund, is looked upon as a complication of injuries inflicted upon the combination. To banish 'knobsticks,' as such intruders are styled, is therefore the duty of every associated unionist. This was the grievance of the Derby dressers in 1831–32, who complained against machinery and knobsticks; and similar complaints have been

* Appendix to Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons (1825).

the cause of the numerous strikes and lock-outs, which of late years have diversified the character of industrial history.

In ordinary circumstances, when from any dispute the workmen have left their employer, the latter, if in a factory, whose capital in machinery, buildings, or the raw material for manufacture, is thereby prevented from making any return, endeavours to procure fresh hands. The establishment, in the meanwhile, is closely watched, as at Glasgow and elsewhere, by parties summoned by the union from a distance, who are called 'pickets,' and who, under their captains, exercise their assumed authority without the slightest fear of the law, which requires the name of the offender to be inserted at length in the warrant of apprehension. These pickets are relieved, and, if knobsticks arrive in large numbers, they are strengthened; and the strangers are either prevented from entering, or, if already at work, are held in a state of blockade, and are compelled to remain night and day in the factory. On being recognised in the public streets, these 'knobsticks' (as they are contemptuously termed), it will be remembered, were beaten, and, in extreme cases, were shot at, and had vitriol thrown in their faces.

These proceedings are alike opposed to the common and the statute law, and therefore are not done in the open day, but require secresy for their accomplishment. Hence the necessity of secret oaths and secret committees amongst the unionists, which, previously to 1824, owed their existence to the illegality of combinations, and which it was hoped would be abandoned when that illegality was removed. The secret proceedings, however, continue to disappoint the anticipations then indulged in, and to form one of the peculiar features of the unions.

Fifthly.—The wages are to be regulated by the profits the employer may derive from improvements in machinery. This proposition is the most unreasonable and the most illogical that the unionists have made in their singular programme of demands. The *reductio ad absurdum* was never more felicitously demonstrated than in this fifth rule. For example, the loss to an operative, or work-

man, by improved machinery, is ordinarily either very remote or very partial; to a master it is immediate, and sometimes total. The quantity of labour portioned to a particular trade is gradually lessened as the improved machinery is adopted; but, as the demand for the cheaper productions is thereby increased, there is perhaps no instance (if we except the handloom-weavers) where the operatives in any numbers have been eventual sufferers. The owner of old machinery, however, unless he can cause the wages of the men employed on the new machine to rise, or reduce the hire of his own machine, is thrust out of the market.

The demanding, moreover, higher wages because labour is lessened is, in other terms, an attempt to impose a duty or fine upon mechanical improvements; and as the capital which supports industry is mainly dependent for production on machinery, that fine would be a fatal impost. Without the aid of machinery, there is neither the means of subsistence nor of clothing for a single year; and, therefore, to pause in the invention of mechanism would be equivalent to a backward step in our industrial movements. The proceedings of unions, however, have quickened in every direction, contrary to their anticipation, and diametrically opposed to their views, the demand for mechanical invention. They are the blind instruments to a good which is little dreamt of in their philosophy; for the self-acting mules, the newly-contrived printing-rollers, and the thousand-and-one other devices which have been invented, are the immediate offspring of strikes and combinations.

The principle, too, of adjusting wages to the supposed profits of the employer, which is involved in claiming higher remuneration from improved machinery, is wholly untenable. The application of this principle has been frequently tried, and as frequently failed, because it involves a direct injustice. One notable instance we may fairly cite, by way of illustration. The dyers of Manchester turned out in 1824, setting forth on a placard that their masters had obtained an increase of price for dyeing,

more than adequate to the advance they (the workmen) claimed. The workmen, in fact, sought wholly to take the profits of their employers, while they were not at the same time liable for their losses. Wages, under these circumstances, completely changed their character, and became an *ad valorem* tax upon profits; and the labourer was converted into a kind of partner, without the usual liability of partnership, or the inducement to risk capital in trade, which the operatives, above any other class, were immediately interested in encouraging. As regards partnerships with working-men, however, and the appropriation of the profits of capital, about which a good deal has been recently said, we hold them to be utterly impracticable. Upon what principle has a workman the right, in addition to his wages, to share in the profits of his employer? It is difficult to conceive upon what pretension this right is founded. Wages are nothing more than the market-price of labour, and when the labourer has received them he has received the value of the commodity he has disposed of. Beyond this he can have no claim. To admit him to share in the profits of his master would constitute him a partner of a very anomalous kind, in which, without risking anything himself, he would be entitled to participate in the gains, and be exempt from the losses, of trade —a principle of partnership that neither law nor reason recognises.

The evils resulting from trades-unions are multifarious, and their name is *legion*; the advantages derived from them are limited, and may be comprised under a single head. Of the former, three are obvious—the loss to employers from their stock-in-trade lying idle during a turnout; the impossibility of performing contracts, or calculating as to the success of speculations; and the general insecurity of property into the value of which human labour enters. The loss to the highly-paid artisan, in the wages sacrificed during an extended strike, and to the great body of operatives, who are prevented from disposing of their labour at its fair price, must also be taken into account. It is impossible, moreover, to prevent a widely-

spread derangement in other descriptions of labour, beyond the immediate trade affected by a strike; for manufactures, as a rule, are the products of an infinite division and great diversity of labour, and an integral portion being out of order will cause all the others to become equally deranged. Such was the case, for instance, when the colliers turned out, in 1830, throughout the neighbourhood of Oldham, Ashton, and Stockport, and the various works in that part of the country were, consequently, obliged either to be carried on at a very greatly-increased expense, or to be entirely closed. The effects of the strike on all consumers of fuel—on calico-printers, spinners, powerloom-weavers, &c., who were no parties to it—were most disastrous. Notwithstanding these drawbacks from trades-unions, the benefit, it is alleged by their friends and promoters, of upholding a class of highly-paid artisans is of the utmost importance. In every civilised society of which we have any record, the value of this class of men has been duly recognised. Whilst compulsory labour existed, they interposed between the patrician and the slave, but in free countries they are called upon to do higher duties. In forming the connecting link between wealth and poverty, they serve to stimulate the latter, for their existence, indeed, furnishes almost the only motive to exertion to the working-classes of this country. Thus far their somewhat ardent friends.

Granting, as we do cheerfully, that this class of artisans are not only an intelligent body of men, but that they are steady and skilful workmen; yet they are so confident that their capacity at all times will procure for them certain employment, that they rarely, when in the receipt of the highest wages, lay by a farthing for a time of sickness or for stagnation of trade. Meanwhile, whenever these periods come, these highly-paid artisans are mostly found cursing their masters, instead of upbraiding themselves, for their own improvidence. A good deal of their earnings, ample as in many instances they are, are spent in trades-unions, to say nothing of the time they sacrifice in the same way, and the neglected state of their homes and families. Who

are the men that habitually labour to persuade the workmen to lay the burden of their own sins and follies at the door of their employers? Not the distressed—not those who have struggled manfully against destitution, but generally those who have thrown up lucrative employment, because they preferred travelling and haranguing to steady and honest toil; or those whose dissolute and turbulent conduct has occasioned their dismissal, and rendered them marked and dishonoured men throughout the trade. The plain truth cannot be too frequently uttered—the working-classes, and they only, can raise their own condition; to themselves alone must they look for their elevation in the social scale; their own intellect and their own virtues must work out their salvation; their fate and their future are in their own hands, and in theirs alone. If they wish to be as well off as their employers, or to step up a few rounds higher on the social ladder than they are at present, they must provide against the evil day of depression, and emulate, instead of envying, those who have reached a position above them. All that this class of men want is, a little more prudence and worldly wisdom, a little more diligence and energy, and, above all, the habit of economy, in which, as a class, they are wofully deficient. It is not higher wages, as we have already remarked, nor more steady employment, that the *élite* of our artisans require: as it is, they are more highly paid than many clerks, schoolmasters, and even curates; but, with their present habits, twice their present earnings would not mend their position. The want is moral, not material—a better education, to give purer tastes and higher aims; strength and sense to withstand temptation; the courage to differ from their associates, and to pursue resolutely their own course. With these qualities, they could easily work out their own redemption. But they must get rid of the delusion that the evils of society are to be removed from *without*, and not from *within*; that the people are to be passive parties, and not the principal agents, in their rehabilitation.

A fundamental principle of the trades-unions—a principle which has the most extensive effect—is to fix a rate

below which, not only no member of the union, but no person whatever, shall work for any master, be he a good or a bad workman. It is scarcely possible to conceive anything more absurd in action than this principle is. When thoroughly examined, it is at war with the common instincts of our nature, for what can be more ridiculous than to ask a strong and skilful workman to reduce his power of labour to that of a weak and unskilful workman? This is inverting the whole order of things, and holding out a premium upon incapacity. Yet, practically speaking, such is virtually the case. With the view, however, of obviating the absurdity of every workman, of whatever proficiency, receiving the same wages, the scale which the society adopt is not so much for every day, but in proportion to the amount of work done by the men; so that there is a considerable difference in the amount of weekly earnings by workmen, according to their respective degrees of skill. But still the effect of no person being allowed to work, except at such a rate of wages as the committee have fixed upon, is often exceedingly important, both as regards the workman and the public. The variations in the price of manufactured produce, or the changes in the activity of commercial dealings, are not permitted to have any effect in lowering, whatever they may have in raising, the rate of wages. The master does not venture to give, nor the workman to take, a lower rate of wages than that fixed on, even though the depression of trade compels the one to make a reduction, and the necessity of the other, from his situation, renders him willing to accept it. The arbitrary committee steps in, and says to the master, 'Whatever your circumstances may be, you shall not give less than a certain rate;' and to the workman, 'Though on the verge of starvation, you shall not engage yourself for one farthing less than the prices of the committee, and if you cannot get them you must remain without work altogether.' If the man attempts to take work at a lower rate, and is discovered, he is instantly denounced as a deserter from the union, or 'nob,' and exposed to persecution in a thousand different ways; and if he still continues to work at the reduced rate,

the whole of the combined workmen are ordered immediately to leave the employment in which he is engaged, and the master finds himself under the necessity of either dismissing him, or submitting to the commands of the committee.

There is another principle, equally objectionable to the preceding, which is generally acted upon by the trades-unions. The master is not allowed a choice of workmen, if he desires to take on any additional hands. He is not permitted to select those whom he would prefer, but must go to a certain 'house of call,' so designated by the tailors, and there take the first man who stands upon the list for employment. The levelling effect of this principle upon the real interests of the workman, and the free employment of labour, is sufficiently evident. The main inducement to increased industry is taken away, while idleness and incapacity is in this manner put on a level with industry, talent with remissness, and skill with inattention. Injurious, however, as this system may—nay must—be to the really meritorious workman, and the general manufacturing skill of the empire, there is none to which the majority of union men adhere with greater tenacity. The reason is plain enough. The majority in all trades must be gainers, by the introduction of such a system of rotation in employment, for the inferior men are at all times more numerous than the best class; and it will generally be found impossible to get the majority to abandon a system which gives to ordinary mediocrity the award which ought to be given to rare ability.

There are, no doubt, certain advantages accruing to the workmen by this artificial distribution of employment. Wages may, in particular trades, for a time be raised to a height which is quite inconsistent with the general remuneration of labour in other branches of industry; but to maintain this state of things, recourse is had to an expedient which, in the long run, is as detrimental to the men as it is to the best interests of their trades. With the view to guard against the influx of new hands into their trade, by which the chances of employment to the existing members might be diminished, and possibly

their wages ultimately lowered, the unions have generally laid heavy restrictions upon the admission of persons to the benefits of their association. A long period of apprenticeship is, therefore, required before youths are admitted to the skilled or initiated class, during which the apprentice must pay a stated contribution to the funds of the association. A considerable sum, too, is required to be paid, in the name of entrance-money, by every apprentice or skilled hand who applies for admission. The sum exacted by the cotton-spinners of Glasgow, from entrants, was five pounds, and the other skilled trades were generally in the same proportion. In addition to this, some trades had a system of offering bounties to such persons as would leave the trade and the country altogether. The associated cotton-spinners in the West of Scotland had a bounty of ten pounds, which was offered to every person in the trade who would emigrate to America; and a standing reward of five pounds, payable to every idle hand who would get one of the skilled hands to leave his employment, or to 'unshop' himself.

These details of arrangement and regulation amongst the unions of Scotland were first brought to light at the trial of the cotton-spinners at Edinburgh* in 1838, and as they are curious, we shall cite the principal points of evidence. In the regulations it is stated that—

> It is evident that one great cause of the increase of hands proceeds from the fact that Glasgow is higher paid than any other cotton-spinning district in Scotland. On this account, spinners are anxious to come to Glasgow from other districts, in order to obtain a higher remuneration for their labour, and it is a well-known fact that they are always employed in preference to a Glasgow man.

To remedy these evils, they 'propose that those called illegal men, "nobs" excepted, at present occupying wheels

* Report of the trial of Thomas Hunter, Peter Hacket, Richard M'Niel, James Sibb, and William M'Lean, operative cotton-spinners in Glasgow, before the High Court of Justiciary at Edinburgh, on Wednesday, January 3, 1838, and seven following days, for the crime of illegal conspiracy and murder. By Archibald Swinton, Esq., Advocate. (Edinburgh: 1838.)

in Glasgow, should be offered a union on the same terms as proposed to the west-country spinners—viz., by paying five pounds as entry-money. That these illegal men pay five shillings per fortnight, along with the regular instalments of the trade. They shall grant a bill of security for value received. The five pounds of entrance-money, and the current instalment, from the time they occupied the wheels in the Glasgow body, must all be paid up before they can be admitted as legal members. If any illegal man now occupying wheels shall be refractory, and not agree to those reasonable terms of union, No. 60, *idle spinners shall receive five pounds for each of them they unshop—also one pound for every stranger whom they shall keep from occupying wheels.* In both cases, No. 60 will be obliged to prove them by a referee, clearly and satisfactorily to the trade, before they receive any money. As this body has always respected the laws of their country, wishing rather to protect their union by moral force and public opinion than to have recourse to measures of an opposite nature, let it be distinctly understood, and duly inculcated to every member, that if No. 60, or idle men, commit themselves in point of any violation of the laws of the country, they must themselves alone be responsible.' To prevent the increase of apprentices, they observe that 'another, and perhaps a greater, cause of the increase of hands into our trade, is the employing of boys as piercers. We have before our eyes many examples of the trades *acting nobly to cure the evils of apprentices*, and it is certainly our paramount duty to use every method we can suggest to stop the increase of boy-piercers. We propose to embody this law in the obligation, that no man shall employ a boy as piercer, except according to the privilege long ago stated in our rules. However, if necessity compels a man to employ a boy, he shall in no case whatever do it further than as an inside piercer, and discretionary power shall belong to the shop, and not to the man, in all cases of this description.' And in order to keep down the number of hands in the trade, they enact, as a general rule, that 'every man willing to emigrate shall receive ten pounds for that purpose.'

The unions were also extremely severe to workmen who did not pay their regular contributions, or who proved themselves refractory to the commands of the committee. Upon the refractory workman the arm of the union fell very heavily, since his offence was deemed to combine disobedience to the rules with treachery to the common cause. Default in payment of contributions or of fines, which were levied for a variety of purposes, was visited with proportionate severity. The refractory men were not permitted to work in any master's employment; but if they chanced to find such engagement, the committee at once sent notice to the master that he must immediately dismiss them. If the master refused, the combined workmen in his employ went out on strike, and that generally had the effect of compelling obedience. It will readily be imagined, that an organisation, embracing such wide and diversified interests, which the preceding facts establish, must require very powerful machinery to enforce general obedience to its mandates: this machinery was not wanting, and the means employed for that purpose constitute, perhaps, the most dangerous and hidden parts of the system. To uphold the power and support the authority of the ruling committees, various methods were resorted to, of which the most important were these. First, a regular weekly contribution was levied from every member, according to the rate of wages he received. That of the Glasgow cotton-spinners was proved by the books of the union, produced at the trial just mentioned, to have been half-a-crown per week, and in extraordinary emergencies five shillings, from each man; and from so large a body of men, it may readily be inferred that the contributions soon amounted to a very large sum.

It was proved, moreover, that the sum expended by the committee of that trade, during the latter part of 1836 and the first four months of 1837, amounted to the enormous figure of 11,831*l*. In a letter written by one of the prisoners —Richard M'Niel, secretary of the association—there is the following account of the way in which this large sum was disposed of up to May 1837, which was exclusive of the charges of the Glasgow strike :—

	£	s.	d.
To Johnstone	999	10	0
To England	713	16	6
Combination Laws . . .	360	0	0
Time Bill	721	0	0
To Emigration . . .	4,325	0	0
Public Question . . .	100	0	0
'Liberator' Newspaper . .	978	0	0
Cabinetmakers . . .	180	0	0
Block-printers . . .	340	0	0
Duntocher Strike . . .	3,024	0	0
Voters	90	0	0
Total. . . .	11,831	6	6

The evils of the Glasgow trades-union were not limited to mere expenditure, however wasteful and extravagant that might be. Oaths were administered to the members of the union, which bound them, first, to keep secret the taking of the oath; and, secondly, to obey in all matters, legal or illegal, the will of the majority, as expressed by the ruling committee. The taking of such oaths was long practised in the union. James Murdoch, one of the witnesses, swore:—

That he entered the association many years ago; that when he entered, the association was not then so general as it has since become, and he was told that, unless he entered and joined it, he would be put out of the work; and he was afraid that, by the influence which the men supposed they possessed, they would make his life uncomfortable. *Took an oath in two branches, one of secresy of the taking of the oath*; after explaining the good to flow from the oath, the second branch was administered, to abide by resolutions of a majority in all cases, and to keep secret the proceedings. A Bible was used, by being placed on the occasion in the right oxter (armpit). A word was given—*Ashdod*, from Isaiah xx. 1. *Signs* were also used for recognition to the brethren. An addition was made, in 1822, in the word and oath—*Armageddon*, from Revelation xvi. 16. The oath was more vicious in its nature, introducing something about punishment and abhorrence of 'nobs.' Understands a 'nob' to be a man who enters at a reduction of wages during a *strike*, or (what is a greater offence) by revealing the names of the secret committee, or speaking to any man who reveals the secret committee. Had not been present at an oath for nine or ten years, since which a third one was introduced, and that oath was much worse than either

of the former. It contained something about masters, not in the prior ones.

One of these oaths is to be found in the evidence before the Combination Committee of the House of Commons, in June 1825, and it runs as follows:—

I, *A B*, do voluntarily swear, in the awful presence of Almighty God, and before these witnesses, that I will execute with zeal and alacrity, as far as in me lies, every task or injunction which the majority of my brethren shall impose upon me in furtherance of our common welfare—*as the chastisement of nobs, the assassination of oppressive and tyrannical masters, or the demolition of shops that shall be deemed incorrigible*; and also, that I will cheerfully contribute to the support of such of my brethren as shall lose their work in consequence of their exertions against tyranny, or renounce it in resistance to a reduction of wages; and I do further swear, that I will never divulge the above obligation, unless I shall have been duly authorised and appointed to administer the same to persons making application for admission, or to persons constrained to become members of our fraternity!

The binding nature of these oaths, and the tenacity with which the members of the union adhered to them, rendered it exceedingly difficult to obtain evidence in crimes connected with union conspiracies. One of the witnesses examined at the trial fully exemplified the truth of this remark. Robert Christie, with the utmost reluctance (for the confession was literally wrung from him) said:—

I was examined six or seven times before the sheriff before I told all I have now disclosed. I was reluctant, knowing that I was under an oath not to reveal anything about the association, and knowing that many individuals had been shot at and burnt with vitriol by that association. It was a scrupulous fear of my oath, and of that danger, which made me keep silence to the sheriff, until I became persuaded, by the strong assurance of the sheriff, of protection and safety. I did not tell, though it was a right thing to disclose a murder, until I saw I was in safety, and I did not refuse to speak out because M'Lean's statements had left any doubt upon my mind of the truth of what he had told me. It was the breaking of the oath, and the fear.

The proceedings of the Glasgow trades-union, passing

through the several phases of mobbing, rioting, and intimidation, at length culminated in a murder of the most cowardly character, because it was committed by hired assassins for a given sum of money, specially set apart by the secret committee for that purpose. The sum paid was proved to have amounted to 100*l*. The circumstances connected with the proof of this fact are curious, and worthy of being cited. Kean, Lafferty, and Orr were tried at Glasgow for discharging loaded firearms, with intent to murder, at a cotton-spinner named Graham. The deed was committed at midday, in a crowded street of that city, as the new hands were leaving the mill; and the assassin was seized immediately, with the pistol in his hand; and three eye-witnesses at the trial, besides the wounded man, swore to the fact. Kean was unanimously convicted, though defended at the expense of the union, and sentenced to be publicly flogged and transported for life, which sentence was carried into execution. Lafferty and Orr, who were convicted only of assault, were sentenced to seven years' transportation, and eighteen months' confinement in Bridewell, respectively. The unfortunate man Graham, who had been wounded, was brought into the court from the infirmary, stretched on a mattress, and in a hollow voice identified the prisoners.* Though he survived, after a long and painful confinement, he was maimed and disabled for life. The combined cotton-spinners held a public meeting, at which they *solemnly disclaimed all connexion with the bloody deed*, representing it as the unauthorised act of a private individual, in a period of great public excitement, owing to the strike which prevailed. After having undergone his punishment, Kean however, seized with a feeling of remorse, sent for the sheriff, to whom he made a voluntary confession, which was proved before the Committee of the House of Commons, in June 1825, at which Mr. Huskisson presided. The confession is worthy of being cited :—

Glasgow Jail, May 9, 1825.

I, John Kean, at present prisoner in the Tolbooth of Glasgow,

* These particulars are taken from the *Edinburgh Review* (April 1838), which ably summarised the whole proceedings of the trial.

declare that there are three districts in and around Glasgow, consisting of 800 cotton-spinners or thereabouts, who were formerly in the practice of having passwords and signs; but since the passing of Mr. Hume's Act, they make no use of them, and the object they have in view is to keep up their wages. There are two committeemen appointed from each district, whose duty is to conduct the business of their respective districts, and to report to the select committee, who are three in number, and who are also changed every two months. The three persons who are selected as committeemen are not known to the operatives, except the district committees, who are sworn that they will not make known their names. The names of the two committeemen of the Bridgeton district are—Thomas M'Conn, cotton-spinner, Landressy Street, and works in Barrowfield Mill, and William M'Lean, residing in Mile-end, and works in Lindsay, Ewing, and Co.'s mill, Mile-end; who were the two persons *employed the declarant and John Gillan*, who lodges in Bain's, shoemaker, head of Struther Street; Daniel Orr, residing with his mother in Mill Street, Colton; John Campbell, residing with his father in Muslin Street, and who *supplied them with pistols, and gave them money to buy ammunition.* Thinks the pistols, which were new, were bought in Paisley. Daniel Orr and John Campbell bought the powder and shot, he thinks, in Moses M'Culloch's shop in the Gallowgate. *They were to receive a reward of* 100*l.*, *or thereabouts, and, provided they succeeded, more money was to be advanced by the committee.* Messrs. Wright, Dunlop, Lindsay, and Ewing were particularly pointed out to them, as persons *whose lives should be taken* as soon as possible. Gillan was the person who, along with the declarant, fired at Graham; heard that George M'Donald was the person that shot at Robert Watson. The committees met at one time in the house of Peter M'Arthur, King Street, Glasgow; and since M'Arthur left King Street, they met in William Ewing's house (tavern), east side of the High Street of Glasgow, every Saturday night, between the hours of eight and nine o'clock.

JOHN KEAN.

According to the Report,* this confession was quite voluntary, and was neither procured by threats nor promises, reward or promised reward, of any kind. Important, however, as the confession was, it failed to connect the union with the foul deed, legally. But, in the course of time, the real facts of the case came to light, and the Cotton-spinners'

* Parliamentary Combination Committee (1825).

Committee were the immediate instigators of it. In the month of July 1837, thirteen years after the shooting of Graham, the murder of Smith took place in the streets of Glasgow, during the continuance of another strike, under circumstances which left no doubt as to the assassin, or o his being hired by the secret committee of the Cotton-spinners' Association; and, in consequence of evidence which went to connect the committee with this murder, the whole of the members were arrested a few days after, while the authorities, in the course of the preliminary examination, with a view of bringing them to trial, stumbled upon a very important witness, whose evidence threw a light upon several unsettled points. One Murdoch, a cotton-spinner, who turned out to have been a member of the secret, select, or assassinating committee, at the very time that the assassins of Graham were claiming the reward for his murder in 1825, was examined at the trial of the cotton-spinners, in regard to his knowledge of this old assassination, in order to prove the general character of the conspiracy, and his evidence fully confirmed the confession of Kean. Murdoch says:—

He remembered the shooting of John Graham. After this, witness was a member of the select committee; but it then acted openly, on account of a dispute which had taken place in the trade about the shooting, it being resolved that such a measure should *not again be repeated or authorised.* Kean was the person who fired the shot. He was whipped through the streets of Glasgow, and banished. Daniel Orr had made claims on the committee, and a reference was made to five, to consider his claim. His claim was, *that he had been hired, with Kean and Lafferty,* and another man, to shoot at Graham. His claim was 20*l.* Referees ordered him to produce a witness to *prove his hiring, and he produced Thomas Paterson; and the referees were satisfied, and awarded the sum.* After Kean's trial, twelve shillings weekly, for eighteen months, was paid his wife. Lafferty's wife got the same. He was convicted, sent to Bridewell, and then, by the association, was sent to America. Knew things as a member of committee. The expenses of Kean's trial were paid by the association. This was in 1825, or early in 1826. Remembers a meeting of the association after this, *to deny the charges* that the association had anything to do with these crimes. Two reporters were brought

to report the speeches, which were reported in the newspapers. *Thomas Paterson, already mentioned, spoke, denying any participation in the assassination*; but this meeting was before Orr's claim.

The evidence speaks for itself—it requires no comment. The crimes and misdeeds of the association were, however, not confined to murder and assassination, with the view of carrying out their object. They hired agents to throw vitriol in the faces of those whom they considered as their opponents. Dr. James Corkindale, M.D., Glasgow, bears testimony to this fact, and to the terrible consequences it entailed upon its unfortunate victims. He says, 'that in the month of September, 1825, Charles Cairney, a cotton-spinner, came under my care as surgeon of the Royal Infirmary. He had got a large quantity of sulphuric acid dashed in his face by a fellow-workman. The acid was spread over the whole right half of his head, from the nose to the nape of the neck. The effect produced was deep sloughing or mortification, by which the half of his face and the half of the scalp became an ulcerated surface, thick patches of mortified parts falling off in succession. The right eye was completely destroyed, and the right ear dropped off with the dressings, an entire putrid mass. He suffered great pain, and was several times in danger of his life.'

Murdoch distinctly proved that this burning of Cairney was by the direction, and at the immediate instigation, of the cotton-spinners' committe. He swore as follows:—

He remembers Walker, a member, tried for shooting at Brown in 1827. Was present at a private consultation, before his trial, at a shop-meeting (Hussey's) with members, as to his defence. It was proposed to get men *to swear that Brown had himself hired persons to shoot at his house.* It was not known then that Walker would prove guilty. Knew that the proposal as to men swearing so would be falsely. Walker pleaded guilty, and was banished. Remembers Cairney, who had been *nobbing*, getting one of his eyes burnt out with vitriol. There was a trial. Peter Millen was tried for this and acquitted. Saw schedules at that time of payment of aliment to four men (James M'Donald one) for this burning, for being impeached with that action. M'Donald was

not tried for it, because he fled on account of that business to Catrine Works.

Mr. William Rose Robinson, Sheriff-depute of Lanarkshire, confirmed by his evidence the general criminality of the association. When asked by the Committee whether any cases had come under his knowledge of extreme injury sustained by individuals, in consequence of the throwing of vitriol, he said:—

There have been cases where the individuals have been irreparably injured by the loss of sight, and otherwise, and in consequence of being extremely lacerated, have continued, and, must continue, miserable objects. I brought certain certificates of the medical gentlemen, that I might, if required, be able to lay before the Committee the exact state of the effects of this vitriolic application to the human body. Among the same class of operatives, the powerloom-workers, there was, in 1823, a conspiracy to assassinate one master, and five spinning-masters. There was also, at the same time, and by the same operatives, one of the cotton-mills attacked, with a view to an assault upon the persons who were working therein. The number of persons who did so amounted to a mob. There was one life lost, in consequence of a shot from the mill; and such was the appearance generally, that, after trying to get matters restored to quiet without the military, I was under the necessity of calling the military, with a view to protect the lives and property of the proprietors and workers in said mill. There are a great many more acts, of various descriptions, of which a detail can be given if required. The cotton-spinners have also been combined for a number of years in a similar manner; they have secret oaths, one of which has been produced.

It may readily be conceived, that such a system of intimidation, as these facts indicate, must have struck terror to the minds of the workmen who found themselves exposed to it. The Sheriff-depute said, 'that it was with the utmost difficulty that witnesses could be got to come forward to give evidence against the combination; that he was obliged to meet them in the night, at different obscure places, in order to take their depositions; and that as soon as they were delivered, the witnesses were, at their own request, put in jail to protect them from violence,

in which five of them lay for five months, till the trial came on.' The result was, that these men were obliged to be sent out of the country—otherwise they would have been got rid of, by the operative *thuggism* which then prevailed throughout the United Kingdom.

According to the Report, from which the preceding evidence has been mainly condensed, the sprit of combination amongst the labouring classes, in 1824, was widely spread, and had its strongest hold upon the skilled artisans. In almost every part of the United Kingdom, indeed, in which large bodies of men were collected for the purpose of carrying on any craft or manufacture, combinations existed, in a more or less objectionable form, and was the subject of almost constant complaint and representation. Among the more prominent cases examined by the Committee, were those of the coopers, the seamen in the Tyne and the Wear, the papermakers, the shipwrights at Bristol, at Shields, and in the River Thames, the coachmakers in Dublin, and the workmen in some of the collieries in Scotland. They also enquired into the cases of the cotton-spinners, and of the trades in Ireland. These associations of workmen varied considerably in extent, consisting in some instances of only a few hundred individuals, while in others they comprised several thousand. These bodies were generally constituted with great regularity, having their presidents, secretaries, committees, and printed regulations, by which they were ostensibly governed. The superintendence of the business of these associations was generally assigned to a committee periodically elected, by the direction of which the men were governed in their discussions with the masters, and in respect to the circumstances under which the labour of the whole body was to be continued or withdrawn. The object was nearly the same in all the associations, as shown by the evidence. That of the coopers of London was boldly avowed, namely: '*To raise and equalise their wages, to restrain the future admission of apprentices into the trade, and to limit the hours which any man should be permitted to work, though working by task.*'

This, in effect, was to fix a maximum upon the exertions and the consequent profits of the skilful and laborious workman, who was not allowed to reap the full fruits of his power and industry, for the purpose of securing employment to those less able or active than himself. The seamen in the North, known by the name of the 'Loyal Standard Union,' comprised the seamen of the Tyne and Wear; and their object in combining was to raise their wages, and to establish a bye-law by which the conduct of their members should he regulated. Under this bye-law. many of the services which for years had formed a part of the usual duty of the seamen, they were in future to desist from performing; it also contained an obligation to sail only with a mate and crew belonging to the union, which necessarily reduced the shipowner, either to confine himself to crews so composed, or to relinquish the hope of manning his ship in any of the ports mentioned. The adherence of the seamen to that engagement was stated to have been in several instances so firm, that the masters were constrained to yield to it, and to advise the mates and men on board their ships to enrol themselves amongst the members of the union. The Report contains some shrewd observations in relation to strikes, which are well worthy of consideration at the present time:—

It will be seen (it says) that in their general construction these societies are nearly similar; their objects, although in most cases connected with the rise or maintenance of wages, usually extend to conditions affecting the conduct of the business or manufacture in which the members of the respective combinations are occupied, particularly the number and description of apprentices or persons to be engaged, and the exclusive employment of persons connected with the society. The resources on which they depend are derived from general contributions, form at once a bond of connection, and supply powerful means of carrying into effect their purposes, by the application of them to the support of such individuals as, in maintaining the common cause against the masters, may be deprived of employment, and require assistance. As, in all cases carried on by a combination of the workmen, it is indispensable to success to deprive the masters of the power of substituting other workmen for those who may be dismissed or withdrawn

from their service, every effort is necessarily directed to draw or retain as large a portion of workmen within the circle of the combination as possible: to effect this, every art of seduction and persuasion—every application of threat, insult, intimidation, and outrage—is, as circumstances require, put in practice.

The Report, in conclusion, contains the following striking and well-timed remarks:—

Your Committee are desirous that their impression of the importance of imposing a restraint on the system of combination as now pervades the country, directed to purposes highly prejudicial, and supported by means, amongst which may be reckoned distribution of money, insult, intimidation, and the most atrocious crimes, should not be measured by the lenity with which they recommend it should in the first instance be treated. The danger arising from it, unless cautiously restrained, appears to your Committee to be of the most formidable character, and to affect equally the individual interests of those immediately concerned, the interests of the public, and the internal tranquillity of the country. If the spirit of dictation now manifested be suffered to prevail among the working-classes—if the application of capital is to be controlled, and the principle of free labour totally subverted—every part of the process of manufacture and trade subjected to the judgment of committees, and every improvement by machinery, or otherwise, admitted or rejected at their discretion—the necessary consequence must be, that capital will be withdrawn or transported, the source of every branch of our industry gradually cut off, and the whole labouring population of the country consigned to the distress and misery, which it is the tendency of the ill-advised combinations, in which so great a proportion of it is implicated, rapidly and inevitably to produce. Against such a state of things, should it be continued, involving in its consequences the most important objects, to the security of which the superintending vigilance of the Legislature can be directed, it will become the duty of Parliament to look for effectual remedies, nor to cease till, by the successful application of them, the public protection is secured. At this moment the greatest part of the manufacturing labour of the kingdom may be said to be under the dominion of the committees of the respective associations, which are themselves under the influence of agitators, who dispose and govern it according to their will, deriving power and importance from the dissensions they foment, and, after subverting the natural relations between the employers and the employed, are rashly urging the destruction of trade itself, reckless of the individual misery, the crimes, and public calamities with which it must be attended.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE GENERAL TRADES' ASSOCIATION.

THIS association was set on foot to bring into a common bond all the organised trades-unions. On June 28, 1830, a meeting was held at Manchester of the various delegates from branches of the National Association, in order to elect officers, the number of twenty trades having joined the union. The sittings were continued the two following days, and twenty-five resolutions were adopted. Amongst these are the following:—

Every trade, on being enrolled in the association, is required to pay 1*l.*, each member being called upon for 1*s.* as his entrance-fee, and a sum of 1*d.* per week being the rate of after-contribution.

The funds of the society are only applicable to prevent reductions of wages, and in no case to procure an advance.

Each member of the association shall be entitled to 8*s.* per week during the continuance of a strike for a reduction of wages.

Each trade shall continue to pay six months before it can be entitled to the benefits of this association.

No trade can be admitted members of this association that is not regularly organised and united in itself.

The following were amongst the anticipations of the founders of this institution:—

The immense capital, which the association is likely to have at its disposal, may be seen by a very simple calculation. Suppose that out of the many millions who inhabit the United Kingdom (and the majority of whom are workmen), there be one million of subscribers to the union: their subscriptions, in one week, would amount to 4,166*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.*; in the year to 216,666*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.*; and in five years to the enormous sum of 1,083,333*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* The economical plan, also, upon which the association is founded,

forms one of its strongest recommendations; for it imposes a burden upon none, while it protects all—a penny a week being a sum so low, as to come within the means of the humblest class of operatives.

The design of the association, as far as it affected to insure, at the same ratio, very different risks, was founded upon a miscalculation, much grosser than those under which benefit societies have suffered. The artisans of 8*s.* and 30*s.* per week were alike called upon to pay one penny per week, to be insured against a reduction, which was seldom the same in amount, and unequal as falling upon unlike wages, which various trades have very different chances of incurring. Besides, if the money paid to a trade is the same, whether it has belonged to the association four months or four years, there must frequently be great unfairness as respects the older members. The insurance against reduction of wages can only be undertaken, with any approximation to accuracy of calculation, by particular trades-unions.

We must, however, do the General Trades' Association the justice to say that they have effected some good in their time, and to that extent they are deserving of due respect. The association was, we believe, largely instrumental in getting up the arbitration scheme, which has operated beneficially for the hosiery and glove trades, and may be advantageously imitated by other industrial bodies belonging to the working-classes. We cite the document *in extenso*:—

Origin and progress of the Board of Arbitration and Conciliation of the hosiery and glove trades, of which Nottingham is the centre.

The hosiery trade, for a period of two centuries, has been centred in the counties of Nottingham, Leicester, and Derby. Leicester has long been the centre of the woollen branch, as Nottingham is of the cotton, silk, and merino branches, which form by far the largest portion of the trade. These last employ, according to Mr. Felkin's estimate, from 20,000 to 25,000 men in hand-frames (not reckoning the frames worked by steam-power), spread over the counties of Nottingham, Derby, and the northern part of Leicestershire. The wages of these hand-frame knitters

are regulated by the Board of Arbitration and Conciliation, and all questions arising from wages are referred to them for settlement.

There are few trades in the United Kingdom in which there has existed so much agitation and irritation as in this. For a century past strikes have been frequent and protracted, and in some instances they have led to disastrous and even to fatal consequences. Luddism, as we have already remarked, was an outgrowth of the opposition to improved machinery, which the framework-knitters believed had a tendency to reduce wages, and which was not suppressed until several of its unhappy leaders suffered the extreme punishment of the law. Throughout the present century, indeed, to the the year 1860, strikes and lock-outs have continued, and in years of brisk demand the trade has been constantly subjected to loss and embarrassment consequent thereon. Trades-unions have existed in every branch, from about 1780 to the present day. The trade has always had to maintain a sharp competition with the foreigner, and especially against the cheap labour of Saxony. The system of employing middle-masters, which is a necessity of the trade, is liable to great abuses, and the cupidity of individual employers has, at times, given rise to great oppression; hence there has always been cause for irritation and dissension, and, however unreasonable the demands of the workmen may occasionally have been, their grievances have been many, and often calculated to embitter their minds against employers and their agents. From these dissensions both the capitalist and the workman have been frequent sufferers, and strikes have heretofore been usually resorted to by the workmen as their only means of redress. Frame-breaking and burning in effigy were amongst their worst consequences in the first quarter of the century, and in modern times they have been embittered by gross personalities and inflammatory placards.

It was after a struggle of many weeks in the wide-frame branch, in the autumn of 1860, that the Board of Arbitration and Conciliation originated. This was the third or fourth strike in the same branch during that year. The workmen struck for an advance of wages, which their employers

believed it would be impolitic to grant. The manufacturers met together to consider what steps should be taken to terminate the strike, and as the branches which were at work contributed to the support of the branch which refused to work, a lock-out was proposed. Before resorting, however, to such an extreme course, some manufacturers wished to try conciliatory measures, and it was resolved to invite the workmen to a conference. The invitation was cheerfully responded to, and the deputation of employers met the men in the committee-room of the Chamber of Commerce; and after a protracted discussion, extending over several days, all difficulties were adjusted, upon the express condition that a Board of Arbitration and Conciliation should be formed, to prevent such calamitous disputes in future.

The board was immediately constituted, and met for the first time on December 3, 1860, at the committee-room of the Chamber of Commerce, where it continues to hold its meetings. At the outset it consisted of nine manufacturers, chosen by a public meeting of their own body; and nine operatives, selected by their respective trades-unions. Recently their number has been reduced to seven each, but in all other respects the rules appended hereto continue to govern the board in its constitution and proceedings.

Questions of wages, the manner in which certain classes of work should be performed, and the rate at which new classes should be paid, constantly occupy the attention of the board; but, in addition, other matters have arisen, which have an important bearing on the material and moral interests of the workmen. One of the first subjects which demanded its attention was the abominable practice of the truck system. Some of the middle-masters, whilst paying the regulation-prices to their workmen, continued to keep them in a state of subjection, by supplying them in advance with various articles of consumption—such as groceries, flour, cheese, bacon, &c. This, although in contravention of the law, is sometimes very difficult of suppression, as it is not always done in a direct manner, but through some relative keeping a shop or store, in which the employer

possesses a secret interest. Goods supplied in this way are invariably charged much above the market-value, besides being of inferior quality, which is tantamount to a large reduction of wages, and deprives the workman of his independence. The board advertised in the public papers their determination to stop the system by prosecuting the offenders, and by removing the machinery from any middle-master having recourse to such practices. A prosecution was instituted in one instance, and these measures had the effect of entirely stopping that oppressive system; if it is at all practised at present, it is in such a secret and mitigated manner as not to be known by the board. Another evil, which reduced the purchasing value of the workmen's earnings, was the custom of paying them in the villages at late hours on Saturday night, or early on Sunday morning, when no markets were available. That evil also has been checked by the board.

The discussions at the board are conducted in the most friendly spirit, and in the most orderly manner. The workmen propose a manufacturer as president, and the manufacturers propose a workman as vice-president. One of the results of these proceedings is, that the workmen become better acquainted with the laws which govern trade and commerce, and with the influence of foreign competition; and the masters learn how to appreciate the difficulties of the workmen, and to sympathise more with their trials and struggles to maintain and improve their position.

The success of this measure is, however, more attributable to its preventive than to its curative character. During the disastrous years of 1863–64, the trade suffered from the American war, and the manufacturers sustained great losses. The workmen also were destitute of employment.

The strikes of former periods entailed great sacrifices upon the workmen, as they necessitated large combinations to sustain them. The trades-unions levied as much as one shilling or eighteenpence per week from the scanty earnings of the stocking-maker for many weeks in succession, and the clothing and furniture of families disappeared

during a prolonged strike. At present, the contributions to the trades-unions, during some years, do not exceed that of a single week under the old system.

During the six years of the existence of the board, no strike or lock-out has taken place, and there never existed so much good feeling between employers and employed as at the present moment; and during the last two years, wherein labour has been scarce, and agitation on the question of wages prevalent throughout England, the manufacturers of this branch of industry have been able to make contracts without apprehension, and to execute them without delay.

(Signed)

Manufacturers.	*Workmen.*
A. J. Mundella, *President.*	I. Saxton, *Vice-President.*
T. Hill (Messrs. J. & R. Morley)	H. Farrands.
R. W. Smith.	T. Wilson.
T. Ashwell.	W. Foster.
J. H. Lee.	— Straw.
T. Block (Messrs. Rogers & Co.)	G. Kendall.
H. F. Cox.	John Lamb, *Secretary.*

CHAPTER XX.

THE PRICE OF LABOUR.

'Bear in mind the full and absolute right of all individuals, employers and workmen alike, to bring to market the commodity they have to dispose of, whether it be labour or capital, in the best terms in their power, as long as, and only as long as, they exercise their own rights without prejudice to the rights of others.'—*Speech of the Right Hon. William Ewart Gladstone, in the House of Commons.*

The principles which regulate the wages of labour form, perhaps, the most important division of Political Economy, and their consideration has absorbed the time and reflection of some of the most profound thinkers of the age. The labouring classes compose the great bulk of the community, and a nation is flourishing and contented, as they are well or ill supplied with the necessaries and enjoyments of life. The causes which lead to the depression and elevation of wages are, therefore, deserving of the most attentive study, and every writer on Political Economy, of any mark or weight, has directed his earnest attention to their practical explanation.

When men cease to work upon their own account, they must receive from their employers, in exchange for their labour, such articles of wealth as may be necessary to preserve them in working condition, and enable them to keep up the race of labourers. The articles of wealth which the labourer receives, in exchange for his labour, are denominated wages. When the quantity of necessaries and comforts which the labourer receives is large, wages are said to be high; when it is small, they are said to be low. When money becomes the instrument of exchanging one thing for another, a distinction must be made between

money-wages and commodity-wages—or, in other words, between nominal and real wages. Real wages consist of the quantity of necessaries and comforts which the labourer receives—nominal wages of the sum of money in which he is paid. If money always retained the same value, in relation to the necessaries and comforts of life, nominal wages would always be a correct measure of real wages, and both would rise or fall together, and in the same proportion. But the exchangeable power of money is liable to constant fluctuations, and therefore nominal wages often rise while real wages fall, and fall while real wages rise. It is unnecessary to add, that it is on the state, not of nominal, but of real wages, that the condition of the working-classes depends.

The price of labour, like the price of any other commodity, is governed by the proportion between the supply and demand; and as this proportion will be equally influenced, either by vicissitudes in the supply or demand for labour, we shall confine ourselves to these two heads—first, the circumstances tending to augment or diminish the supply of labour; and, secondly, the circumstances tending to augment or diminish the funds, or capital, for the employment of labour. Variations in either of these two sets of circumstances will obviously produce similar results, and tend to lower or advance wages. The effect of a reduction of wages on the labour-market compels a workman either to reduce his expenditure, or by increased exertion make up for the diminution in his income. But, as the reduction in the price of labour has probably arisen from slackness in the demand for its products, it follows that lengthening the hours of work only aggravates the evil of scarcity of employment, and thereby accelerates the downward tendency of wages. This must generally be the case where workmen have not any provision on which they can fall back during periods of stagnation of trade; and by doing most work when it is least needed, they contend against their own interests. For want of this resource, the natural effect of a rise in the price of provisions is, however, counteracted.

It is important, however, to repeat, that the price of labour, like the price of a commodity, is determined by the proportion betwixt the supply and demand. The effect of a bounteous or deficient harvest, in reducing or raising the price of bread, furnishes a familiar illustration of our views. The same remark will apply to timber, tallow, hemp, cotton, or any other commodity which largely affects our industrial labour; but the excess of a supply of any one of these commodities brought to market will depress that commodity in price, not merely in the ratio of that excess, but in a much higher ratio; and that, conversely, the supply being less than the demand, enhances the price in a similar manner. This results from a very obvious principle, namely—that, quality and other things being equal, there cannot be *two prices* for the same article in the same market. Supposing the supply to be abundant, and that some of the sellers have more than their usual quantity to dispose of—under these circumstances, finding that their stock on hand rather exceeds the usual amount, they naturally feel impatient to sell, and try to force the market. To tempt buyers, they offer their goods at something less than the accustomed price; and as one man cannot sell dearer than his neighbour, the price of the whole commodity in the market is reduced. If, however, in place of a redundancy, there is a *scarcity*, the operation is commonly the same. The sellers will hold back, and the increased competition will be amongst the buyers, who, being apprehensive of not purchasing the stock they require, will offer a higher price than usual; and the example once given, it will be followed by all in a similar position. Precisely the same principle governs the market of labour. Suppose, in a body of one hundred workmen, there are five, equally good with the rest, who cannot find employment; in this instance, the rate of wages will not be determined by the ninety-five employed, but by the five unemployed. As a matter of course, masters will employ those whom they can hire at the lowest wages; if the five unemployed offer to work, say, for 20*s.*, in lieu of 25*s.*, they will discharge that number

of their present workmen to make room for them. But the surplus of labour continuing undiminished, and the workmen discharged, urged most likely by the same necessities as their unemployed predecessors, they too will be compelled to offer themselves at 20*s.* a week, and thereby supplant five more of their employed fellow-workmen. In this manner the reduction of wages will extend through the entire trade; the trifling redundancy of five workmen, like a trifling excess of commodities in the market, reducing the wages of the entire body of operatives.

But this principle operates more forcibly on workmen, or dealers in labour, than on dealers in commodities. If the market is overstocked with commodities, the owners may withdraw them, keep them in bond, or store them in warehouses, till the demand increases; but the workman has rarely such an alternative; he cannot withhold his labour from the market, for he must either work or starve, and is thus compelled to take the wages he can get, however inadequate to his wants. We have thus arrived at two truths of considerable importance: first, that wages depend on the greater or less competition for employment; and, secondly, that it is not the employed, but the unemployed, who fix the price of labour.

The demand for labour can only increase in proportion to the increase of the fund applied to the payment of wages. The augmentation of those employed in agriculture, trade, and manufactures keeps pace with the augmentation in the amount of capital that can be applied to these employments. The farmer, the trader, and the manufacturer are respectively circumscribed by the amount of capital they possess, and their means of employing it to advantage: if the capital of the first increase, he may increase the size of his farm, and employ more labour. The same remark will apply to the trader and the manufacturer, both of whose transactions will increase with their increase of capital. The demand for those who live by wages, therefore, necessarily increases with the increase of capital and individual incomes, and the increase of income and capital is the increase of the national wealth. The

demand for those who live by wages, therefore, increases with the increase of national wealth, and cannot possibly increase without it.

It is not, however, the greatness of national wealth, but its progressive augmentation, which occasions a rise in the price of labour. Accordingly, it is not in the richest countries, but in the most rising, or in those which are growing rich at a rapid rate, that wages are the highest. England, no doubt, is a much richer country than the United States; wages, however, are higher, as a rule, in North America than in this country; and the reason is that, though our Transatlantic brethren are not so rich as we are, they are advancing more rapidly in the career of wealth. The demand, therefore, for labour in that country is greater, and wages also are higher. In England, the channels for the employment of capital are filled almost to overflowing; whereas in America, the natural capabilities of the country have not been so far exhausted, and the capitalist is tempted, by the high rate of profit, to increase his demand for labour. Both capital, therefore, and objects on which it can be profitably employed, are essential to the maintenance of high wages.

An opinion is entertained, by a considerable number of persons, that high wages tend to generate habits of idleness and dissipation amongst workmen. This opinion rests upon very uncertain and inconclusive data. Wages are the reward and encouragement of industry, which, like every other human quality, increases in proportion to the encouragement it receives. Where wages are high, we generally find the workmen more active, diligent, and persevering than where they are low—in England, Holland, and America, than in Ireland, Poland, and Hindostan. Some workmen, indeed, when they earn in four days what will maintain them through the week, will be idle the other two days; but this we believe to be the exception, not the rule. Among the working-classes, as among every other class of society, there are some who do not make the best use of their advantages: they are improvident, intent on present enjoyment, and regardless of the future; but the greater portion will be actuated by the motives

common to our species of increasing their comforts, and bettering their condition. The weakness of the comparatively few ought not, therefore, to be made a pretext for condemning the many.

When the causes which regulate the price of labour are thoroughly understood, the folly and injustice of workmen attempting to fix the rate of wages will, we feel assured, be no longer practised. It will be obvious, then, even to the meanest understanding, that the workmen might as well take out a writ of *ne exeat regno* against the wind, or attempt to stop the flowing of the tide, as to determine what shall be the wage for which he will give his daily labour. Nor can legislation fix the rate of wages; it can secure the freedom of each individual workman, and that is all it can do. The seller of an article will endeavour to obtain a high price for it, which the purchaser will only give if he be unable to obtain it for less. Labour, no doubt, is the most important object that man has to buy or to sell; and each will naturally make the best bargain he can during the disposal of it, and no law nor intimidation ought to restrain either party engaged in the transaction.

The really sound and legitimate mode of raising wages, and improving the condition of a people, is to promote and encourage the increase of the general wealth of the country, by every means which legislative science points out as best suited to that end; and at the same time to remove obstructions, and give facilities to the moral and intellectual improvement of the working-classes. By these means capital will be increasing with the natural growth of population; while the labourers, with better habits, will be less prone to reckless improvidence, and consequently not so likely to outrun the increase of capital. The policy of a distinguished statesman, a sentence of whose speech on the important subject of labour heads this chapter, evidently points in the direction we have faintly indicated; and we can only hope that Mr. Gladstone will live to see the object at which he aims fully realised, in the general contentment and wellbeing of the working-classes.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF PROFITS.

THE old dispute between capital and labour, as to the distribution of profits which are the joint production of both, is still kept alive, and divides the opinion of the working-classes, and even of a few capitalists. The workman sees his employer, to all appearance, steadily and rapidly advancing in the world, in spite of the vicissitudes of trade which inevitably occur; while he himself, in consequence of those vicissitudes, is left to struggle, and often to struggle in vain, for daily subsistence. The workman is said to be disgusted and enraged at that unequal division of the profits of their combined exertions, in which alone he can find an explanation of the irritating difference in their lot. Doubtless, this kind of feeling does exist in the minds of many of the working-classes: in fact, this cry of labour against capital, for a fairer division of profits, is as old as society itself, and will in all probability endure as long; because it arises from that principle in human nature which must always make every man an unjust judge in his own cause, and an unreasonable distributor of funds to be taken from the pockets of others. The existence, therefore, of the alleged feeling of discontent amongst certain workmen, is not even *primâ facie* evidence that the discontent is well founded.

The theory of the case is easily explained. The capitalist and the workman are, no doubt, joint agents (or partners, in fact) in the production of a certain article, and joint sharers in the profits arising out of the sale. The capitalist, say in a factory, supplies the funds, machinery, superintendence; the workman supplies handicraft, skill,

and manual labour. At the end of the year the net returns are to be divided between them, in a proportion either formally agreed upon, or tacitly decided by custom. But the labourer is a poor and needy man; he has no stores or reserve to run to, and no money to supply his wants. He must purchase food, clothing, and shelter from day to day, and therefore cannot wait till the end of the year to receive his share of the common gain. The capitalist, therefore, advances to him what it is thought probable that his share will amount to—*minus*, perhaps, the interest on the advance, and possibly some further small deduction, to compensate the risk of having overestimated the workman's share.

The course of action is clear enough, thus far, but a difficulty may arise which will change the whole aspect of things. The results, for example, of manufacturing enterprise are not always profit, but sometimes loss, and that loss may be continued over a series of years. But the workman, who could not possibly wait, can still less bear his share of the loss. The capitalist, therefore, has to encounter all the losses, for he cannot call upon the workman to refund the wages he has received. The original compact, by which the division of profits would have been otherwise determined, has thus become modified, for the convenience of the workman, into the form in which we at present see it. The workman receives his share of the profits *before* any profits are really made; he receives his share in years in which no profit is made, but actual loss is sustained, and when the capitalist is sometimes being gradually ruined in the partnership. What deductions from his original share should be made in consideration of these predicates? It is clear that he cannot, in common justice, receive as much as though he waited till the profits were realised, and bore his proportion of losses when losses were incurred.

The logical deduction from these premises is simply this—the workman's wages are his share of the profits commuted into a fixed payment. This commuted share he is secure of receiving as long as the manufacturing

enterprise in which he is engaged actually goes on. The capitalist alone encounters the risk of losses, alone furnishes all the advances, alone encounters the risk of ruin, and receives only that share of profit which may remain after the labourer's commuted share is paid. The workman's share is a first mortgage—the capitalist's share is only a reversionary claim. Mr. M'Culloch enunciated similar views to these, in a small publication, which is well deserving the perusal of the working-classes.* He says:—

> If labourers are to participate in the advantages of successful enterprises, they must also participate in the losses resulting from those of a contrary description, and must consequently, in cases of failure, be deprived of their accustomed and necessary means of subsistence. The hazard to which they would thus be exposed might, it is true, be lessened by making a part only of their remuneration depend on the issue of the enterprise. But if it were really an advantage to participate in a chance of this sort, the fixed portion of their wages would be proportionately diminished; and at every failure of an enterprise, the labourers engaged in it would be thrown upon the workhouse, or on the contributions of the benevolent. It is nugatory to suppose that the condition of the workmen would be improved by their engaging in such uncertain projects. Security, and a reward proportional to their deserts, conduce most to their wellbeing.

Some, however, are of opinion that a better feeling would be promoted between workmen and their employers, and the interests of both materially advanced, by some arrangement which should render the former more directly sharers in the profits of manufacturing enterprise, and more immediately affected by the fluctuation of those profits, than they are under the present system; by some plan, in fact, of paying the workmen a portion only of their earnings in the form of fixed wages, as advances on account, and the remainder at the end of the year, out of the profits when actually realised. Some of the most benevolent of our great employers of labour have turned their attention to this subject, and have even made practical experiments upon it.

* *Wages and Labour*, (Routledge).

The plan, however, appears to be based upon a fallacy. There is, at starting, a practical difficulty to be surmounted. If the workmen already receive, in the form of wages, their full and due proportion of the common gain, then it is evident that they can only become sharers in the distribution of the annual profits by foregoing a portion of their present fixed salaries. They must receive their share of the profits in lieu of, not in addition to, the whole or a part of their weekly wages. The first step to the proposed arrangement must, therefore, be an immediate reduction of the weekly payment to the workmen. Now, the men who would submit to such a diminution of their present certain earnings, for the sake of a fluctuating and uncertain though, it might be, larger addition to their future receipts, are, we apprehend, but few indeed. Under these circumstances, the objection to the conversion of the workmen from the condition of wage-receivers to that of partners, would, we think, come from the workmen themselves.

Supposing, however, the first difficulty got over—what must be done in years of loss, especially when these years of loss are continuous for three or four in succession, which is periodically the case? These years of loss are, generally, years of high-food prices; and, therefore, under a partnership plan, the workman would find himself with diminished earnings and increased expenditure, aggravated by the proportion of loss which at the end of the year would fall to his share, and which (as he in all probability would have no means to meet it) must remain as a debt due from him to his employer, to be repaid when profitable years came round again. It is extremely doubtful whether the substitution of fluctuating for regular earnings would be preferable to the workman, and whether he would not conclude that a small bird in the hand is more to be desired than two large birds in the bush.

It must further be observed, that if workmen are to be interested in the result of an undertaking, they must have some control over its conduct, and be authorised to enquire

into the proceedings of those who are more immediately connected with its management and direction. Under these circumstances, Mr. M'Culloch well remarks that:—

All the advantages of individual enterprise and responsibility would, in consequence, be lost, and the most necessary and judicious steps, in the conduct of a business, might be objected to or censured by those most incompetent to form a judgment upon such matters. At present, when a capitalist engages in any undertaking, he knows beforehand that he will reap all the advantages if it be successful, and that, if otherwise, he will have to bear all the loss. He is consequently determined, by the most powerful motives, to act discreetly, to proscribe all useless expense, and to avail himself of every means or incident that may present itself, to facilitate his projects.

With rare exceptions, all industrial undertakings are carried on to a successful issue by individuals, and not by bodies of men; and the reason why they are so carried on is, that there is a oneness of purpose, a singleness of will, a concentration of means, and a directness of aim, secured in the one instance, and for the most part the very opposite condition of things prevails in the other. A workman, therefore, under these circumstances, would be better off as a recipient of weekly wages, upon which he can fairly depend, than as an expectant of profits, though larger in amount than his wages, which are extremely fluctuating in character, and doubtful at certain times of being realised.

CHAPTER XXII.

CONDITION OF THE WORKING CLASSES.

THE condition of the working-classes is a subject worthy of the gravest consideration and the most careful study. The upper strata of the social pyramid—the middle class, and those immediately above them—cannot be altogether in a satisfactory state, while the lower and broader stratum, upon which the structure mainly rests, is not in so steady and stable a position as political prudence would wish it to be.

Many of the ills under which the working-classes labour might, however, be obviated, if they exercised a little more prudence and foresight; for those ills spring mainly from loose and intemperate habits, which are mostly the offspring of ignorance and irresolution. The working-classes appear to do wrong, in many instances, from not knowing how to do better, or because they have neither the inclination nor the resolution to do right. Intemperance is the master-evil which keeps them down, and they will never rise in the social scale, unless they exorcise that fatal demon from their habits. It is not higher wages, nor more unvarying employment, that our artisans need. As it is, they are more highly paid than many clerks, schoolmasters, and curates. But, with their present habits, twice their present earnings would not mend their position. The want of the working-men is moral, not material: strength and sense to withstand present temptation; the courage to differ from their associates, and to pursue unflinchingly their chosen course. With these qualities, they would have no need to call upon the Legislature to assist them. They could attain the desired position without

asking aid from their employers. In the absence of these qualities, no aid from any quarter can avail them in the slightest degreee.

The progress—that is, the material progress—of the working-classes of this country, during the last half-century, has, however, been remarkable. History furnishes no such parallel, to whatever age or country we refer. The wages of labour—that is, the amount earnable in a given number of hours—have, according to the most reliable testimony, risen considerably. The tables of Greenwich Hospital bear witness to the fact,* that the wages of *carpenters* had risen from 18*s.* a week, in 1800, to 29*s.* 3*d.* in 1836; of *bricklayers*, from 18*s.* to 26*s.* 9*d.*; of *plumbers*, from 19*s.* to 30*s.* In the same period, the earnings of *London compositors*, in the book-trade, had risen from 33*s.* to 36*s.*, while the earnings of compositors employed on the morning papers had risen from 40*s.* to 48*s.* a week. From evidence published by a Committee of the House of Commons, we extract the following table of the earnings of a spinner of cotton-yarn, No. 200, an average type of a large number employed in the cotton manufacture, at these several dates:—

	Weekly net earnings	Pounds of flour these would purchase	Pounds of flesh-meat these would purchase	Hours of work
	s. *d.*			
In the year 1804	32 6	117	62	74
„ 1833	42 9	267	85	69
„ 1850	40 0	320	85	60

We have here the indisputable *data*, that a gradual rise of wages has been concurrent with a gradual reduction in the hours of labour, and a gradual but decided fall in the price of food.

It is, however, to the education of the rising generation that we must look for the amelioration of the working-classes. The adult population are too hardened in habits to effect any material change in their condition; therefore

* *Progress of the Nation.* (Porter).

it will, in all likelihood, be reserved for the next generation to witness what we earnestly and sincerely picture to our minds.

Before 1844, the Legislature steadily refused to educate the people, or to remove the fetters which were imposed upon their labour, while at the same time it unsparingly condemned the evils which sprang almost exclusively from crippled industry and from neglected education. Want of instruction and want of employment lay at the root of all the remedi: 'e evils in the social condition of the people. Yet that w. .t the Legislature refused to supply. The education, however, suitable to effect a change in the character and habits of the people, which is desirable, must be of a sounder and more liberal kind than any that has yet been proposed; and the cultivation of religious feelings, besides the inculcation of moral and social duties, must, therefore, form a large portion of its policy. The nature and objects of secular education ought to be diffused as widely as possible, for these are essential to the wellbeing and progress of society. It is, moreover, of considerable importance to open to the labouring classes the sources of a variety of knowledge, in order that intellectual gratification may be placed within their reach; and there can be but little doubt that there are many among these classes in whose minds the beauties of nature and the wonders of science will excite an interest more than sufficient to counteract the common seductions of sensuality or of sloth. We anticipate, however, a more direct and powerful influence upon the habits of the working-classes, from a system of education which shall include the skill and practice of household management in the course of female instruction; and which, in early life, should thoroughly impress upon both sexes a distinct and familiar conception of the principles of social economy which will be found useful in after-life. A knowledge also of the laws which regulate wages, and the relation of population to subsistence, if widely diffused, and thoroughly impressed upon the minds of working-men, would go far, not only to remove some of the most active causes of the evils under which they labour,

but preclude all reasonable ground for supposing that, thus instructed, they would waste months of time, and millions of money, in what are termed 'strikes,' which involve not only severe suffering and great social disorganisation, but sow the seeds of permanent illwill, and are utterly futile to effect the end they aim at, simply because they are in direct opposition to great natural laws, which cannot be ignored with impunity.

Wages and profits have been represented, by certain political economists, as naturally antagonistic, one of which can only rise at the immediate and direct expense of the other; and the great mass of the working-classes, who receive wages, fully believe in this doctrine, and have recourse to trades-unions as a corrective of the evil it practically creates. Had the London journeymen tailors, in 1835, and other bodies of industrial labourers, understood the law by which the distribution of the proceeds between the workman and the capitalist is regulated, they would have saved themselves and their employers the enormous loss which arose out of their combination; neither would they have allowed themselves to be pushed from their seats by an influx of Germans, who gladly seized upon the vacancy so imprudently created, and who have never since entirely left it. The tailors, too, believed that their wages were lowered to benefit their employers, and they even had the temerity to believe that those employers were bound to give them a portion of their profits in the advance of wages; when, in fact, the employers were suffering from precisely the same causes as they were themselves—causes which produced the depression, so that the masters were unable to make them advances, whether they were willing or no. If the real cause of the depression had been understood, instead of combining against their employers, they would have coalesced with them, for the purpose of removing the restrictions which produced the effect under which they were mutually labouring; and, in lieu of obtaining a temporary advance of wages, they might have secured a permanent advantage, not only for themselves, but for all connected with their trade. The law which

regulates the rate of wages is as immutable as is that which governs the motion of the planets, so that all attempts at legislative interference are quite nugatory, and the only possible way of increasing the rate of wages is by rendering labour more productive, which can only be achieved by allowing every man to employ his talent and his capital in the way which he deems best for himself. It must also be obvious to the men, that all attempts on the part of the master to reduce wages below what may be termed the natural rate, as well as on their part to raise wages above that rate, must inevitably fail, as any such reduction in the first instance would be attended with an unusual rate of profit, which would beget competition amongst the possessors of capital, and quickly raise the rate of wages; while such elevation, in the second instance, would reduce the rate of profit so far as to cause capital to be withdrawn, and wages would then in turn be reduced to their equitable standard.

The great evil under which the tailors laboured in 1835, and also in 1866, was a redundancy of hands, the supply being much greater than the demand. But the tailors brought this evil, in a great measure, upon themselves, for their perpetual strikes drove the masters to have recourse to every possible expedient by way of self-defence; and, consequently, foreigners were introduced, women and girls were initiated in the mysteries of the craft, and work was allowed to be taken home by the workmen to a much greater extent than it had been previously. The result was quite natural; the supply of hands soon exceeded the demand, and the relations between the employers and the employed were considerably modified, so that reciprocal respect between them was scarcely recognised. A disruption has therefore taken place, upon the slightest emergency, since the fatal affair of 1835. Owing to these causes, which would produce the same effects in other branches of industry, if they existed, the hands in the tailoring trade are badly paid—perhaps as badly paid as any body of workmen in the metropolis. The utmost wages which a first-class hand

can obtain per week, working in a first-class shop (taking a whole year), is from 24*s.* to 26*s.*, and few even get that. The 'live' season is generally very short—the 'dead' season is proportionately long; and the scramble for work, during the intermediate period, is mostly severe and unremunerative. The tailors, however, like other bodies of working-men whose wage depends upon demand and supply, can only hope to better their condition by abstaining from 'strikes,' by securing perfect freedom of action for themselves and for all working-men, and by upholding the just rights of property—the only source whence a healthy demand for their labour can possibly spring.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW ARE TRADES-UNIONS AFFECTED BY THE LAW?

THE question arises, how are trades-unions affected by the law?—or, in other terms, how are the serious disturbances between employers and employed, which principally arise from trades-unions, to be obviated? The Royal Commission, with the Right Hon. Sir William Erle at its head, will, we have little doubt, pave the way for Parliament to deal with the matter in a conclusive and satisfactory manner. In the famous Report of the Handloom Weavers' Commissioners, we find the following unanswerable sentence, which is as applicable now as it was when the Report was first issued to the public. The sentence is descriptive of the tyranny practised by trades-unions. These are the words of the Commissioners:—

> We believe that, if this state of things is to continue, we shall not retain the industry, the skill, or the capital on which our manufacturing superiority, and with that superiority our power, and almost our existence as a nation, depends. But, though we believe in the truth of these premisses, they are not the grounds on which we wish now to proceed. Our immediate object is to give freedom to the labourer; and we firmly believe that, as soon as he is made master of his own conduct, he will use his liberty in the way most useful, not only to himself, but to the rest of the community. (P. 118).

Before the Acts of 1824 and 1825 were passed, as we have remarked elsewhere, the common law was extremely severe in regard to combinations of workmen. Mr. Hume procured the repeal of the old law, but his Act was replaced by one passed in 1825, which subjected to summary punishment the offences denounced in the Act of 1824, and

exempted from punishment at common law persons who consulted and agreed among themselves, being present together, what hours they would work, and what wages they would demand. As regards other combinations, the Report just cited states:—

> We are inclined to believe that the state of the law in this respect is not generally known. It seems to be supposed that combinations are not punishable, unless accompanied by violence, intimidation, or molestation. This is true as respects the statutory punishment, but not as respects the far heavier punishment awarded by the common law. All meetings or agreements whatever, for the purpose of affecting the wages or hours of work of persons not present at the meeting, or parties to the agreement, are conspiracies. So are all agreements for controlling a master in the management of his business, in the persons whom he shall employ, or the machinery which he shall use. So of course are all agreements not to work in company with any person, or to persuade other persons to leave their employment, or not to engage themselves. In fact, there is scarcely an act performed by any workman as a member of a trades-union which is not an act of conspiracy or a misdemeanour. (P. 102).

The Act of 1825 enumerated several punishable offences which were not in the Act it superseded. It gave to the convicted party a right of appeal to the Quarter Sessions, and a suspension of the sentence in the interval. Three years later, assaults in pursuance of a combination to raise the rate of wages were made punishable by imprisonment and hard labour. Lord St. Leonards framed a short abstract of the provisions of this Act, which shows that the power of combination, both among the men and the masters, is expressly limited to the sole purpose of determining among themselves what rate of wages *the persons present at such meeting shall demand;* but by a later Act (22 Vict. c. 34), it is provided that to endeavour to persuade others to cease or abstain from work, in order to obtain the rate of wages or altered hours of labour, is not illegal so long as persuasion is peaceable, reasonable, and without threats or intimidation, direct or indirect. Such is the existing law.

We append the letter of Lord St. Leonards on the subject of strikes, which may be deemed a valuable comment on the law as it at present exists, and will be perused with both profit and pleasure:—

STRIKE, BUT HEAR.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I have not been an inattentive observer of the strike and its consequences. It is no longer necessary to point out the evil consequences of strikes as at present conducted, although strikes properly conducted would no doubt be legal, and may at times become expedient. It is hopeless to expect that they can ever be altogether prevented; but surely, in the interest of both masters and men, but especially of the men, they should rest upon better foundations than the present strike. No one denies the right of a working man, or of any number of working-men, fairly to resolve, for example, not to work under a given amount of wages; but there must be individual action. A central committee of a trade with all its branches issuing its mandate for a strike, which all members must obey under severe penalties, and which, in truth, compels them to coerce, as far as they can, working-men who are not members, and with whom they will not work unless they pay fines and become members, is an odious, an insufferable tyranny, which degrades the free men of England into mere slaves. If a law were to be passed placing the free workmen of England under such a rule, we might expect an insurrection. And yet vast masses voluntarily place themselves under a yoke which they would resist in the shape of authority with all their energies. Tens of thousands of intelligent workmen, with wives and children to support, happily in full and yet moderate work at fair wages, find themselves suddenly deprived, as by paralysis, of the use of their right arm. It would, indeed, spread consternation throughout the land if suddenly, by the will of Providence, the hand of labour were deprived of its power and cunning. What shall we say of the workman, if he voluntarily withholds for unfair purposes that labour which he is destined to undergo—his contribution to the common stock—and which a kind Providence has given him power to execute? It cannot be denied that the present strike was commenced on false grounds, and was intended to place master-builders entirely at the mercy of their workmen. The act of the masters was a defensive measure. The declaration which they required might perhaps have been improved, but it

does not seem to be open to any serious objection. Its meaning cannot be misunderstood. The workman is required to declare 'that he is not, and that during the continuance of his engagement he will not become, a member of or support any society which, directly or indirectly, interferes with the arrangements of this or any other establishment, or the hours or terms of labour, and that he recognises the right of employers and employed to make any trade engagements on which they may choose to agree.' The conclusion shows that the workman is left at perfect liberty to strike for wages, for example, but that he must act upon his own freewill, and not submit to the orders and regulations of any society. The declaration has been termed an odious document, and the strike has ultimately been maintained upon the prejudice raised against it.

The masons of London last month made a proposal to the masters, which, if they had represented the whole body of the building operatives, would probably have led to a good understanding between the masters and the workmen. These masons had withdrawn from the conference, and they gave up the strike at Trollope's for the nine hours. They proposed to resume work on the same terms as before, and to work with those of their own trade or others who had accepted the declaration. *'They would work in strict conformity with the law of the land,'** and they proposed a revision of their bye-laws. Those laws are now before me, and they certainly require revision. But these excellent terms are clogged with the stipulation that the masters are to dispense with the declaration. Now, 15,000 workmen have accepted and are working under the declaration. They must be protected against the men on strike, and must be placed upon as safe a footing as the latter if the latter return to work. The masters, therefore, could hardly withdraw the declaration at once without damaging the position of the men now at work. It has long since struck me that all that the masters can require by way of declaration is that the men will obey the law. If they have any object beyond the law, that would open to a new view. But they declare, and I believe them, that they have no such view. If they have not, in my opinion the law provides everything which their declaration endeavours to secure to them. The whole question turns upon the right of freedom of action. Societies, with their present powers, cannot exist concurrently with freedom of action, particularly as regards non-members; nor can it be

* I could almost imagine that the masons had seen a copy of my paper.

allowed that benefit societies, sanctioned by the law for far other purposes, should be perverted to the maintenance of wanton strikes forced by the few on the masses. Parliament will be sitting before the strike ends, and no doubt this great social question will receive in Parliament all the attention which its importance demands. I would fain hope that neither masters nor men will by their conduct force the Legislature to place new restrictions on the relation between the two classes.

With this preface I come to the real object of this letter. I offer a plan as a suggestion to both masters and men. Let them, before they reject it, as Hervey says, 'Ponder and pause—pause and ponder.' I propose that the declaration should no longer be acted on, and that in lieu thereof a paper to the following effect shall be printed, framed and glazed, and hung up in every shop, &c., where all may see it. It will require no signature, nor any counterfoil or number, and of course it leaves the workman's liberty of quitting his employment untouched. *It is self-acting, and it is mutual. It binds both master and man.* And its operation would not be limited to the present time. It is as follows:—

'The law affecting masters and workmen was framed with a jealous regard to the interests of the working-man. The Act of Parliament (6 George IV., cap. 129) which repealed all the former laws relative to the combination of workmen, states that combinations interfering with the free employment of capital and labour are injurious to trade and commerce, dangerous to the tranquillity of the country, and especially to the interest of all who are concerned in them. The object of the Act is then declared to be to make provision as well for the security and personal freedom of individual workmen in the disposal of their skill and labour, as for the security of property and persons of masters and employers.

'The Act then makes the following offences punishable by imprisonment not exceeding three months, with or without hard labour, viz.:—Where any person shall by violence to the person or property, or by threats, or by intimidation, or by molesting or in any way obstructing another,—

'1. Force, or endeavour to force, any journeyman, manufacturer, or workman, or other person, to depart from his hiring, employment, or work, or to return his work before it is finished;

'2. Or prevent, or endeavour to prevent, any journeyman, manufacturer, workman, or other person not being hired or employed, from hiring himself to, or from accepting work or employment from, any person or persons;

'3. Or for the purpose of forcing or inducing any other person to

belong to any club or association, or to contribute to any common fund, or to pay any fine or penalty; or on account of his not belonging to any club or association, or not having contributed or having refused to contribute to any common fund, or to pay any fine or penalty; or on account of his not having complied, or his refusing to comply, with any rules, orders, resolutions, or regulations made to obtain an advance or to reduce the rate of wages, or to lessen or alter the hours of working, or to decrease or alter the quantity of work, or to regulate the mode of carrying on any manufacture, trade, or business, or the management thereof;

'4. Or shall force, or endeavour to force, any manufacturer or person carrying on any trade or business, to make any alterations in his mode of regulating, managing, or carrying on such trade, manufacture, or business, or to limit his number of apprentices, or the number or descripton of his journeymen, workmen, or servants.

'But the Act provides:—

'1. That any persons may meet together for the sole purpose of consulting upon and determining the rate of wages or prices upon which *the persons present at such meeting*, or any of them, shall require or demand for his or their work, or the hours or time for which he or they shall work in any manufacture, trade, or business; or may enter into any agreement, verbal or written, *among themselves* for the purposes of fixing the rate of wages or prices which the parties entering into such agreement, or any of them, shall require or demand for his or their work, or the hours or time for which he or they will work in any manufacture, trade, or business.

'This relates to the men.

'2. The like powers are conferred upon the master in regard to consulting upon and fixing the rate of wages or price, and the hours or time of working: each class, masters and men, are subject to the same law.

'By a later Act (22 Victoria, cap. 34), passed to protect the working-man, it is provided that no one, whether in actual employment or not, shall, by reason merely *of his entering into any agreement with any workman, or other person or persons*, for the purpose of fixing or endeavouring to fix the rate of wages or remuneration at which they, or any of them, shall work, or by reason merely of his endeavouring peaceably and in reasonable manner, and *without threats or intimidation, direct or indirect*, to persuade others to cease or abstain from work, in order to obtain the rate of wages or the altered hours of labour so fixed or agreed

upon, shall be deemed or taken to be guilty of "molestation or obstruction" within the meaning of the former Act, and shall not therefore be subject to prosecution or indictment for conspiracy. But it is provided that nothing contained in this latter Act shall authorise any workman to break or depart from any contract, or authorise any attempt to induce any workman to break or depart from any contract.

'Such is the law which binds both classes. The masters accept its obligations without reserve, and pledge themselves to obey it both in letter and spirit. They have set forth the provisions of the Acts of Parliament, in order that every workman may be informed of the *law* which binds him. The law itself, the masters find, lays down the true rules both for them and their men; they, therefore, have withdrawn the declaration originally required from the men, and substitute this paper. It alone will bind the workmen who have already made or accepted the original declaration—all will be placed on the same footing. There will be no distinction between those now at work and those who may resume work. The masters, in the spirit of peace and goodwill, require nothing of the men but the same obedience to the law as they themselves are ready to pay. The law itself, and nothing more, but nothing less, shall become the *Rule of Trade.*

'The simple object of the masters is that, according to the law, they and their workmen shall be free to make what agreements they please, without the interference or coercion of any other persons. With that object, the acceptance of employment where this paper is hung up will be considered to amount to an admission by the workman that he is not at that time, and to a declaration that during his employment he will not become bound to any rules or customs which do or would deprive him or his fellow-workmen of their free liberty to accept and continue or to relinquish employment upon such terms as they think fit.

'Freedom of action will place every man according to his merit, but the motto of both men and masters should be, "Let labour be unshackled."'

I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

ST. LEONARDS.

Boyle Farm, *Dec.* 10, 1859.

The position of trades-unions has been determined by the following decision. Of course, every association of individuals is legally protected, provided its objects are not of an illegal or immoral character. As an association, however,

a trades-union has no legal character—no right to sue or be sued in its name, or to possess property, except by means of private trusteeship, unless it is incorporated by Crown Charter, Act of Parliament, or unless it complies with the Acts that relate to joint-stock companies or friendly societies. If neither of these courses is adopted, it is a merely voluntary partnership, and all the members of it are personally liable for its debts to the full extent of their property. Many of the trades-unions, however, endeavoured to obtain for themselves a recognised legal existence by compliance with the Friendly Societies' Acts. As the majority of the unions were established for the purpose of giving relief in case of sickness and death, as well as for that of trade protection, it was thought that they had a perfect right to be registered as friendly societies, and to enjoy all the legal privileges that such registration conferred upon them. A case, however, in the Queen's Bench has somewhat startled those who were under this impression.

The case to which we refer is *Hornby* v. *Close*. It came before the Court by way of appeal from the decision of the Justices of Bradford, in Yorkshire, who dismissed an information under section 24 of the Friendly Societies' Act (18 & 19 Vict., c. 63), against the respondent, who was the treasurer of a society called 'The Leeds Branch of the United Society of Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders of Great Britain and Ireland,' for misappropriation of the funds of the society. The society was constituted for the purpose mainly of affording relief to members when sick, or aged, or out of employment, and also for the burial of dead members, and for the benevolent purposes which were stated in the rules of the society. The rules also provided, that where members were compelled to do piecework, and the firm reduced wages below what were termed reasonable prices, an allowance should be made to members resisting such reduction. The rules imposed fines on members calling at any shop in which a dispute had arisen with the society, or allowing a labourer to violate the rule by lending him tools or instructing him in other branches of the trade, and using their influence to obtain employ-

ment for a non-member. An allowance per week was to be given to members losing their employment by reason of disputes connected with the society. The society had complied with section 44 of the Friendly Societies' Act.

The justices, although they considered, as a matter of fact, that the charge against the treasurer was proved, declined to convict him, on the ground that the society was not a society within the meaning of the Act, because the rules showed that it was a society established for purposes which were illegal and contrary to public policy, as being in restraint of trade, and tending to the encouragement of strikes.

From this decision an appeal was brought. Mr. Mellish, Q.C., who appeared for the society, contended that the main object and purpose of the society being clearly of a charitable and benevolent nature, the introduction of the rules, on which the justices had founded their refusal to convict, did not render the objects of the society illegal. The Court gave judgment unanimously in favour of the decision of the justices, and expressed a decided opinion that the society in question did not come within the operation of the Friendly Societies' Act, so as to give the justices jurisdiction; because the very purpose of the society, as shown by the rules, was not merely to carry out the ordinary benevolent objects of a friendly society. It was, in fact, a trades-union, and as such tended to the encouragement of strikes. The Court also expressed the opinion that, although such a purpose might not bring the members within the reach of the criminal law, yet the rules would certainly operate in restraint of trade, and in that sense were therefore unlawful.

The importance of this decision has not been exaggerated, because the Judges of the Queen's Bench, not content with deciding the question before them (which was simply one of jurisdiction), laid down a principle which puts all the trades-unions of the country in a state of outlawry. If their objects are unlawful, the Courts of Law and Equity will not enforce any of their contracts, or give them any rights of property. Even as private

companies, they would be deprived of the rights which attach to partnerships, because the law will enforce no contract, whether entered into by a private individual or by an association of individuals, which is immoral in its character, or which is against public policy. It must not, however, be supposed that trades-unions by this decision have been unequally treated by the Judges of the Queen's Bench, because a short time ago the same interpretation of the law was applied to the Ironmasters' Association in the Midland Counties. The law may be wrong in principle, but undoubtedly, if any society does restrict the number of apprentices, the hours of work, the amount of labour to be done, and the employment of others, the law does hold that such society is unlawful as operating in restraint of trade. This is one of our old legal principles, and, if it is wrong, the Legislature alone can alter it. It must, however, be noticed that the Court does not decide that the members of trades-unions are guilty of any illegality in joining together for the purposes of their associations, but simply that, as some of the objects of such societies are unlawful, the Courts will not enforce their contracts or redress their wrongs.

Many are of opinion that the repeal of the Combination Laws was an evil, and that their re-enactment would be a benefit to the public at large. Such laws, they say, as were enacted, and in full force up to 1825, against combinations, would in these days be both ineffectual and unjust, and either of these reasons ought to be sufficient for their condemnation. Experience, moreover, has shown that legal impediments to combinations have no power in diminishing them, and that their only effect has been to render the members of these societies more secret and more flagitious in their operations. Of more than one hundred witnesses examined before the Combination Committee of 1824, only one wished their continuance; and even he, to a certain extent, bore testimony with the rest to their inefficiency; and the evidence taken by the Committee of 1825 was equally divided on this point. It would, therefore, be highly impolitic, by the opponents to

the Combination Laws, to resort to an expedient which has been all but universally condemned. Combinations, they say, have been more systematically conducted and more extensive since the alteration of the law respecting them; but they have also been more open and direct, so that the character of the danger can scarcely be misapprehended, nor a remedy applied in ignorance of their purport and intent.

The simplest form in which combinations present themselves is that of meetings of workmen called together on particular emergencies for the purpose of considering whether the rate of wages given, or proposed to be given, by the masters is sufficiently high; and also of passing resolutions declaratory of their opinion on the subject, leaving it to each individual workman, whether or not a party to the meeting, to behave as he may think fit upon such resolutions. Occasional unions of this sort, whose only object is to do that in common which, beyond all question, might be done by each member severally, and supplied with no other means of procuring combined action, than the conviction which may arise from their discussions, and the shame which will attach to the apparent desertion of the common cause, are undoubtedly entitled, if not to favour, at any rate to the sufferance of the law. So long as combinations confine themselves within these limits, they may be properly and safely left free from any further control than such as the common principles and practice of our laws will supply. But the case becomes wholly different, when those who combine to refuse work are not simply passive in their proceedings, but endeavour, by violence and intimidation, to induce others to follow their example. At this point the law ought to interfere, and rigidly enforce some kind of protection for individual liberty of action.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DREAD OF IMPROVED MACHINERY.

'One of the most striking and lamentable effects of the want of knowledge, producing disunions amongst mankind that are injurious to the interests of each and all, is the belief which still exists amongst many of the working-men of these kingdoms, that the powers and arrangements which capital has created and devised for the advancement of production are injurious to them in their character as producers. The great forces by which capital and labour now work are, accumulation of skill and division of employments. The applications of science to the manufacturing arts have the effect of ensuring cheap production and increased employment. These applications of science are principally displayed in the use of *machinery*.'—*Capital and Labour*, p. 93.

ALTHOUGH individual labour may be occasionally displaced by the substitution of machinery for manual dexterity, all are great gainers in the long run by the use of that power. Through machinery we all principally possess, however poor we may be, many of the comforts and conveniences which constitute the difference between man in a civilised and man in a savage state. We may go further than this, and say that, in consequence of machinery having rendered productions of all sorts cheaper, and therefore caused them to be more universally purchased, it has really increased the demand for that manual labour which, according to the reasoning of some, it has a direct tendency to diminish. Yet, there are a considerable number of the working-classes who have a lingering, lurking dislike to machinery, which they cannot rationally explain, and who look with the liveliest apprehension at any improvement which may be effected in that grand aid to human industry. The recent riots at Coventry in relation to the application of steam-power to the manufacture of certain kinds of ribbon, and

the *émeutes* at Northampton, Kettering, and Wellingboro', against the introduction of the sewing-machine for the manufacture of boots and shoes, are two cases in point. The handloom-weavers of Glasgow, as early as 1827, had, however, a very different view of the matter, which was highly creditable to their intelligence. In the year 1827, a Committee * of the House of Commons examined, amongst other persons, Joseph Foster, a handloom-weaver, who answered the following questions:—

Q. Are the Committee to understand that you attribute the insufficiency of your remuneration for your labour to the introduction of machinery?—*A.* Yes.

Q. Do you consider, therefore, that the introduction of machinery is objectionable?—*A.* We do not. The weavers, in general, of Glasgow and its vicinity do not consider that machinery can or ought to be stopped, or put down. They know perfectly well that machinery must go on, that it will go on, and that it is impossible to stop it. They are aware that every implement of agriculture or manufacture is a portion of machinery, and, indeed, everything that goes beyond the teeth and nails (if I may use the expression) is a machine. I am authorised, by the majority of our society, to say that I speak their minds, as well as my own, in stating this.

The class of men to whom we allude have an hatred to improved machinery, simply because it has a tendency to disturb the rules and regulations which they have laid down for labour, and which, from an extreme narrowness of view, they deem conducive to their interest. This is surveying the great question of labour from a very limited point of view, and as though no one had so immediate an interest in its proper solution as those who are engaged in its direction. The capitalist—the co-producer—is scarcely recognised, and the consumer, the most important party of all, is completely ignored. There is a story told of a Bedfordshire farmer, who, being consulted by the clergyman of the parish as to the propriety of putting up a prayer soliciting, in the recognised reverent form, for a shower of rain or so, replied: 'Aye—aye, sir, just enough

* Emigration Committee.

to wet the turnips.' The objectors to the general improvement of machinery entertain the same views as the simple farmer we have just cited. 'If improvements do make their appearance,' say they, 'let them only be in conformity with our views, and adapted to our rules and regulations of work.' In fact, they would dwarf the genius of invention, and its mechanical application, to their own narrow, selfish, and contracted views, utterly regardless of other classes, both as producers and consumers.

CHAPTER XXV.

FACTS IN RELATION TO STRIKES.

Some curious and interesting facts have been evolved from the history of strikes. One of these is that strikes are hardly ever resorted to, except by workmen who are in the habit of receiving high wages; and another is, that the time of their occurrence is invariably when trade is brisk and prosperous. An intelligent witness, examined before the Combination Committee, said, in reply to certain questions:—

The men never turn out when the trade is bad.

Another witness, of considerable experience in the cotton-spinning trade, said:—

Q. According to your experience, it was when wages have been high, that the combinations have taken place, and not when they were low?—*A.* Yes; it has been when they (cotton-spinners) have got most, that they have turned out.

Again:—

They (journeymen hatters) take care to turn out in the spring of the year, and that is the time when every master wants his journeymen, and of course is standing still; his customers want to be supplied with hats.

Q. Have you found that when the men were in demand combinations for rise of wages were most frequent?—*A.* Yes, that is one of the greatest misfortunes a master has to encounter; he makes his contract, and the moment he does that, the men turn out for rise of wages.

The reason of this is obvious. There is greater likelihood of an employer yielding to the wishes of the employed when he has numerous orders on hand, than when he works,

as it were, on speculation. In the former case, his non-compliance may benefit his rivals in trade, and he is better able to comply, as prices are generally higher; in the latter case, his profit being precarious, a cessation of his works would, in all probability, be less hurtful to him. Besides, it is only when work is abundant that those who strike can depend on being supported by their fellow-unionists who remain employed; at other times, the weekly subscriptions are so irregularly paid, that the funds of the combination are wholly inadequate to maintain, even scantily, its idle members. We do not affirm that strikes are always coincident with a prosperous trade, but their occurrence in any trade affords a strong presumption, approaching almost to certainty, that it is in a well-to-do and thriving condition.

One of the most deplorable features of the unions is their hostility to piece or task-work, and the consequent discouragement they give to the exercise of superior skill and industry. 'The man who does task-work,' says an authority on this head,* 'is guilty of less defensible conduct than a drunkard. The worst passions of our nature are enlisted in support of task-work. Avarice, meanness, cunning, hypocrisy, all excite and feed upon the miserable victim of task-work, while debility and destitution look out for the last morsel of their prey. A man who earns, by task-work, 40*s.* per week, the usual wages by day being 20*s.*, robs his fellow of a week's employment.' This points directly to 'an equalisation of wages,' a state of things in which everyone is to earn an equal sum, without reference either to his ability or his diligence. This, in sober simple phrase, would be a premium upon incapacity. To this desire is owing, we presume, that modest rule of the 'National Friendly Society of Operative Worsted Manufacturers,' which is a model of innocence and simplicity:—

IV. That should any member of this society be known to boast of his superior ability as to either the quantity or quality of work he can do, either in public or private company, he shall pay a fine of 2*s.* 6*d.*, or be expelled his society.

* *Trades' Union Magazine.*

This is the spirit which guided Owen, St. Simon, and Louis Blanc, when *l'organisation du travail* was the daydream of the latter's political life. An universal, cosmopolitan enthusiasm for the good of the human race is to produce that skill which is ordinarily considered as the effect of rivalry, and emulation is to be scouted as the enemy of man's highest industrial development.

The trades-unions have been compared, under certain aspects, to the Poor Laws. When their rules are strictly followed, they produce similar results, though in a more aggravated shape, to those which arise from a poor-rate and labour-rate, in their worst forms of abuse. If a workman throw himself out of employ because he is not satisfied with his wages, a weekly payment, say, of 8s. or 10s. is ready for his acceptance, which he can demand as his right, and enjoy in idleness. He can gain nothing by superior qualifications for his business, and lose nothing by the want of them; industry will not increase his wages, or negligence depress them; but the earnings of all are reduced to one common level, an attempt to raise which, by any one man, is treated as an offence to the general body.

One of the worst results of combinations is the delusion which they sanction, that wages are not subject to the general laws of demand and supply, but are mainly dependent on the pleasure of the employers. Wages, say the men, would be beaten down by the masters to the lowest point that could suffice for a maintenance, were it not for our unions. Yet the earnings of men who have never joined the unions have not been so beaten down. Strikes have been scarcely known among the overlookers in cotton-factories, and yet they are paid more than any other persons in these establishments. Nine-tenths of the cotton-workers have never thought of forming unions, and the alleged advantage has never been taken of them by their masters. The wages, for instance, of the throstle-spinners have scarcely varied for many years past, and are consequently, if measured in clothes and provisions, at least 30 per cent. higher than they were formerly. Have the

mule-spinners, on the other hand, gained more by their combinations and strikes?

In those places where strikes have been most frequent, a complete severance of feeling seems to have taken place between masters and men. Each party looks upon the other with distrust, and a vague suspicion renders it quite hopeless for amity or goodwill to prevail amongst them. A diminution of speculation is an obvious result of this state of feeling on the part of the manufacturer, and enterprise loses 'its pith and moment' through the action of those whose immediate interest is to encourage it. In several places benefit societies, legally enrolled, have been made the cloak for combinations, and thus violence and intimidation have been practised by bodies, organised under the apparent sanction of the law. This is one of the most disastrous results that can be apprehended from the spirit of union; it is turning nourishment into poison, and making, what is calculated to confer the greatest benefit on the working-classes, a source of unmitigated evil. Two of the rules of the Manchester Benevolent Society, in relation to the wage-question, and the difference of opinion as to its regulating cause, are immediately to the point:—

That if any foreman, or follower, or dyer, or dresser, should be discharged, the next man that takes his situation must ask the same wages; and if he goes for less, he shall be fined 1*l.*, and the members of the shop shall be fined 5*s.* each for working with him; and if this rule be attended to, the price of labour will be kept up.

That if any man belonging to any other trade should get employment at any legal shop in the trade, or any illegal man that is not a member of the union, in the course of any week, the members of that shop shall give notice to their employer, that they will not work any longer than that week with such characters; and if they neglect so to do, the members of that shop shall be fined 5*s.* each, and not be entitled to any benefit until the said fine be paid.

Could the working-classes, as we have often repeated, be instructed in the laws which regulate their wages, combinations of this kind would cease to exist, and the dense ignorance which enshrouds the faculties of the working-

man would be quickly dissipated. He would learn that wages are not dependent on the will of those who pay them, and that they can only be altered by changing the proportion between the number of labourers, and the funds set apart for their maintenance. They would then see that they might as well attempt to change the physical laws of the universe, as to extract from their employers the wages they are paid at present, and to give a third less of their labour in return. Could they gather something like a knowledge of the nature and constitution of society, they would perceive that those who are above them in station, whom they sometimes designate as enemies, would be neglectful of their own interests, did they desire less than the prosperity and advancement of the labouring population. Would they, also, turn their attention to the inseparable connection between cause and effect, as well as to the actual history of combinations and unions, they might, perhaps, be persuaded that strikes cannot permanently raise wages, but, in nineteen cases out twenty, must have a tendency to lower them. If the working-man could only grasp this great truth, he would, in all probability, more quickly advance in the social scale than he has hitherto done, though that has not been very slow.

CHAPTER XXVI.

STRIKES AND TRADES-UNIONS ABROAD.

AFTER the terrible and afflicting disclosures resulting from the enquiry at Sheffield, Manchester, and elsewhere into trades-unions and strikes, Government wisely determined to grapple with the question, and issued a Royal Commission, armed with great and general power, with the view of thoroughly investigating the subject. That commission has pushed its enquiries into almost every quarter, and we have little doubt but that its report, when it appears, will be a full and ample *répertoire* of almost all that can be prudently said upon the subject.

With this object in view, our Foreign Minister, Lord Stanley, addressed a circular to the British embassies and legations at Brussels, Paris, and Berlin, for the purpose of ascertaining whether combinations analogous to trades-unions existed in those countries, and, if so, what was the legislation on the subject. A circular was also subsequently addressed to all our embassies on the Continent, and to our minister in the United States, with instructions to make particular enquiries into the working of associations of this kind, and to explain fully how they are regulated by the Governments of Europe and by that of Washington. The results of these investigations are interesting and instructive, and deserve the instant attention of thoughtful persons. They throw a good deal of new light on the condition and organisation of industry in some of its principal civilised centres, and their general *résumé* of the arrangements that in a considerable part of Europe adjust the rights of labour and capital suggests reflections of no ordinary importance to the welfare and prosperity of this country.

The circular, however, which has been the cause of this useful information being communicated to us, is well worthy of citation. It runs as follows:—

"The extent to which foreign industry and production now competes with that of England has of late attracted much attention in this country, and it has been publicly stated that increased production abroad, by diminishing profits at home, is tending seriously to affect British commercial interests, and possibly to divert British capital to a more profitable scene of operations.

The comparatively matured industry and commercial enterprise of England is now brought into active competition with that of foreign countries, which is daily becoming more developed, in proportion as nations emerge from the stagnation consequent on internal troubles, a state of war, or of chronic misgovernment. National resources, which have long lain dormant, are now brought into productive existence, and the increased faith reposed in the stability of institutions is giving a surer basis for commercial enterprise.

Irrespective, therefore, of any questions as to abstract matters of commercial policy, causes are at work which must influence the mutual relations of nations, so far as commercial intercourse is concerned; and it becomes a matter of great interest to ascertain the true facts, as regards the productive and commercial development in progress abroad, as regards the results which such development is producing on prices and on wages, and especially as regards the position and prospects of those branches of foreign industry which come most immediately into competition with those of this country.

This circular was accompanied with a memorandum, containing the following questions, which are categorically answered:—

1. In what particulars has the greatest progress been made, during late years, in developing the natural resources and the productive industries of Belgium*?

2. What have been the consequent results, as regards the export trade of Belgium, and especially trade with England?

3. What has been the effect of such increased industrial activity on wages, and on the price of primary articles of consumption? Has there been difficulty in meeting an increased demand for labour, and has that demand been supplied by any displacement in the

* The circular was first addressed to our minister in Belgium.

labour-market—as, for instance, by the diversion of labour from agricultural to manufacturing pursuits, or by the introduction of labour from foreign countries?

4. Has an increase in the manufacturing and industrial activity of Belgium been accompanied by combinations among the working-classes, of the nature of trades-unions, for the purpose of influencing wages? Have such combinations been extended, so as to embrace matters of political interest; and are there any legislative provisions which regulate their existence or operation?

5. Do co-operative societies exist to any considerable extent amongst the working-classes in Belgium, whether as regards co-operation amongst them alone, or in combination with employers? And have the results of such principle of co-operation been in favour of an extension of the system?

The first answer to this series of questions is that of Lord Howard de Walden, relative to the condition of the industry of Belgium. Under the influence of a long period of peace, and the government of a shrewd and sagacious ruler, this country has made very great progress. His Lordship says:—

> There can hardly be a difference of opinion about the industry of Belgium being able to compete, in several branches of manufacture, with that of Great Britain, very successfully in the foreign, and to some extent even in the home markets. The progressive improvement in the character and extent of Belgian manufactures has of late years been very great. This may probably be ascribed to the intelligence of heads of establishments, in availing themselves of the advantages afforded to them by the example and resources of machinery of other countries, and in many instances to the instruction derived from skilled foreign workmen, who have been at times engaged partly to direct and partly to instruct the Belgian workmen.

In several branches of manufacture, there can be no doubt that Belgium can compete with this country. The armourers of Liege, for example, have a name in history, and some of the best specimens of modern firearms were sent from Liege to our own Exhibitions in 1851 and 1862, and to the French Exhibition of 1867. Namur is also celebrated for its glass-works, and Vervier for its products in cloth; and throughout Flanders the cotton manufacture

thrives with the aid of British machinery and, for the most part, of British supervision. The construction of machinery has likewise assumed very extensive proportions, and in that branch of industry, Belgium has become a distinct competitor with the British manufacturer. In all works composed of sheet-iron, such as stoves or fireplaces, the Belgian workman seems to be remarkably skilful; but in other branches of small work for wrought-iron, ordinary ironmongery, &c., he is much behind this country. A good lock and key of this country is scarcely to be found, and it is actually cheaper to buy a good English lock and key together, than to have a most ordinary key alone made in Belgium for a common lock. The industry of blacksmiths and farming is likewise very rude, and such a thing as a tolerable horseshoe is not to be seen; the same may be said of all agricultural ploughs,* carts, waggons, &c. &c.; yet carriage-building is, perhaps, an industry in which they are eminently successful, and greatly excel.

Labour in Belgium is comparatively tractable and cheap; and the characteristics of the Belgian workmen are steadiness and perseverance, combined with great intelligence in working after models. Their habits, moreover, are not so expensive as those of English artificers, and their diet is more humble; so that, should circumstances arise which might cripple the operations of the British manufacturer, Belgium would not be backward in taking advantage of them.

They consume (says the Report) less meat, and their bread is seldom purely wheaten, or white in quality. Rye and the cheaper quality of wheat, called '*épautre*,' enters in great proportion into the composition of the loaf; beer and spirits are both lower in price than in England; they seldom use tea, and the chicory-root constitutes a very economical and wholesome substitute for coffee. Instead of coals and open grates, closed

* We have seen, in different parts of the Continent, some fair copies of the Bedford plough (manufactured by the well-known firm at Bedford, J. and F. Howard); but they had not the neatness of work, the lightness of draught, nor the general excellence of that almost unequalled implement, which is known, we may justly say, all over the civilised world.

stoves and artificial fuel, made of mere dust of coal and clay worked into lumps, are universally in use.

The system of schools for infants from two to seven years, and from seven to twelve years, is very general, and affords great facilities—the children being cared for—to both their parents to occupy themselves in daily service, and by combined industry to ameliorate the condition of their family. In all these respects, therefore, the necessaries of life being the base of wages, the Belgian enjoys advantages over the British workmen.

In general, there is no antagonism between masters and men. The terms for service are entirely voluntary; consequently, combinations for strikes are very rare, except in the mining districts, where, however, they are by no means uncommon, though the people are comparatively better paid. This is difficult to be clearly accounted for, though perhaps the fluctuations in the coal market, and the very great differences in the relative value of coal products, may mislead the workmen as to the rates which it may be supposed the proprietors can afford, and may be brought under dictation to pay.

In Belgium, as in all countries under the authority of the *Code Napoléon*, the state takes industry under its care; it stimulates, but controls and directs it. A central board, composed of delegates from the Chambers of Commerce and high officials, superintends the general concerns of trade; local tribunals, like the old heads of our crafts, arrange disputes between masters and workmen; and the education of artificers is promoted by a system under Government regulation. On the other hand, the state is jealous of co-operation among the industrial classes; it requires that even benefit societies should be placed strictly under its control, and it is only lately that it has permitted combinations of labourers, or of employers, made in order to settle their mutual relations.

There are (says the Report) no trades-unions or co-operative societies existing in Belgium. It is only recently that the law has sanctioned the right of workmen to coalesce with a view to enhance the price of labour: until last year all organised attempts on the part of workmen to raise the price of labour, as well as all attempts on the part of employers unduly to bring about a reduction of the rate of wages, were forbidden, and punishable by the following articles of the Penal Code:—

Art. 414. Every combination amongst those who employ labour, which has a tendency to unjustly lower wages, followed by an attempt to practically carry it into execution, shall be punishable with imprisonment from six days to one month, together with a fine of from 200 to 3,000 francs.

Art. 415. Every combination on the part of workmen to bring about a concerted cessation of work, to interrupt labour in a workshop, to prevent any workmen going to work at certain hours, and, in general, to cause the suspension or disturbance of labour, will be punished by an imprisonment of from one to three months. The leaders of such combinations will be punished by an imprisonment of from two to five years.

These stringent articles of the Penal Code were, however, repealed by a law which only came into operation on the 31st of May last. The substance of the new law is contained in the following article:—

Art. 2. Every person who commits any violence, who threatens to injure, to menace, or to fine, or to use any prevention whatever against those who labour, or those who employ labour, shall be subject to an imprisonment of from eight days to three months, and to a fine of from twenty to one thousand francs.

The system of 'picketing,' as we term it in this country, is also punished with equal severity in the new Belgian law:—

Il en sera de même de tous ceux qui par des rassemblements près des établissements où s'exerce le travail, ou près de la demeure de ceux qui le dirigent, auront porté atteinte à la liberté des maîtres et des ouvriers.

The new law, it will be seen, does away altogether with the invidious distinction drawn by the Penal Code between combinations of employers and combinations of workmen, and removes all legal impediments to the full exercise of the right of coalition by either employers or workmen. The penalties imposed under this law are solely directed against attempts to fetter or control the liberty of others, by means of intimidation or by actual violence.

There are a few associations in Belgium of the nature of benefit societies, for the relief of their members in case of sickness and old age; but these cannot be established

without the permission of the Government, and without having submitted their proposed statutes for official sanction. The burgomaster, or a member of the municipal council of the place which may be the seat of the association, has a right to assist at the meetings, and every year the association is required to render to the municipal council an account of its receipts and expenditure during the preceding year.

In cases of dispute, however, between masters and operatives, the *Conseil de Prud'hommes* often renders valuable services in a conciliatory sense. This institution seems to be well received, and to work well.

Under these circumstances, it is scarcely necessary to remark, that strikes and trades-unions, after the fashion of this country, do not and cannot exist in Belgium; and in that country there is, comparatively speaking, but little antagonism between capital and labour—between employer and employed.

Combinations of Workmen in France.

Combinations amongst workmen, for the purpose of influencing wages, have recently become general in France; and as they are not illegal, except when accompanied by violence, menace, or fraudulent procedure, the Government does not regard them with any considerable degree of alarm.

The Penal Code of France, which aims to promote and at the same time to control industry, formerly comprised the most rigorous stipulations against combinations of workmen. They were characterised as misdemeanours, and the promoters of them could be punished by imprisonment of from two to five years' duration. The combination of employers for the purpose of unjustly depressing the rate of wages was also punishable by law, but with far less severity.

Under these laws many prosecutions were instituted, heavy pains and penalties were inflicted; and the labouring class, deprived of all power of concerting measures for the enforcement of just claims, was left very much at the mercy of employers, whose affirmation in a question affect-

ing wages was believed in a court of justice, while that of the workmen was held worthless. No change was made in these laws until the year 1829, when a modification in them was introduced, which left their fundamental and essential conditions untouched, and merely equalised the penalties against employers and workmen, to satisfy the principle of the equality of citizens in the eye of the law.

The subject, however, was taken into consideration by the Imperial Government in a liberal spirit, and at the commencement of the year 1864, a Project of Law was presented to the legislative body for abolishing the penalties attaching to simple combinations, either of employers or of workmen, for the purpose of influencing the rate of wages. The law, thus modified, was promulgated by imperial decree on the 27th of May 1864. It simply substitutes for the then existing articles of the *Code Pénal* three new articles, which define the penalties to be awarded to combinations, accompanied by violence, menace, or fraudulent procedure, among employers or workmen, for the purpose of causing a concerted cessation of work, with a view to influence wages or interfere with the liberty of trade or of labour. All other combinations are legalised by implication. In other words, the right of peaceful and orderly combination exists, and the law only interferes with what are familiarly termed 'strikes' and 'lock-outs,' when they assume a criminal character.

It must be said that ample advantage has been taken of this change in the disposition of the law by the workmen. There is scarcely a trade in France of which, during the last three years, the members have not combined for the purpose of increasing the rate of wages and diminishing the duration of the hours of labour, and their efforts to this end have usually met with success. 'Strikes,' either general or partial, have been of common occurrence, and one recently assumed a new aspect—the workers in bronze, whose requisition for an increase of wages was accompanied by a demand for a share of two-fifths in the profits of their employers—the books of the latter to be submitted to a committee charged to ascertain the amount of profits

realised. Many disputes, however, between employers and employed have been settled by the friendly intervention of the state authorities. Neither can hold a meeting without previously obtaining the sanction of the prefecture of police, and the application for such sanction has frequently furnished the occasion for an amicable mediation, which has brought about an understanding between the disputants. The combinations to which we allude are totally unconnected with political matters, otherwise they would at once come under the prohibitory action of the law.

The question arises, What has been the influence of the new law on combinations? There are two parties to be heard in the case. The workmen generally admit that the faculty to combine, of which they have largely availed themselves, has enabled them to raise the rate of their money-wages, and to obtain some diminution in the hours of labour, and that the law has, consequently, been of benefit to them. The employers, on the contrary, for the most part assert that the law has proved to them an unmitigated evil, and they have loudly denounced, and continue to denounce, it, as subjecting them to the tyrannous coercion of the employed. *Mutatis mutandis*, precisely the same complaints as are heard on this subject in England may be heard in France.

It is asserted, and with great truth, that the workpeople, by striking for exorbitant wages when they know that their employers have a time-contract on hand, can force ruin upon the latter, and that several contracts have been rejected, owing to the impossibility of working them at a profit while the price of labour is artificially raised. These contracts, it is asserted, pass into the hands of foreign manufacturers, who have not yet fallen under the tyranny of their workmen; and the trade of the country suffers in this way the most serious detriment. Mr. Fane, in his able report from Paris, comments as follows on this part of the subject:—

There are plenty of prophets of evil, who declare that either the unjust pretensions of the workpeople must be controlled by law,

or that the manufacturing industries of France will be ruined. These assertions, like all *ex parte* statements, probably exaggerate the evil of which they complain; but there is sufficient truth in them to lead men of moderate judgment to the conclusion that an enquiry on the subject, such as that in England, must eventually be made also in France.

The question appears to be this—how the right of the workpeople, which nobody in the present day would think of withdrawing from them, to combine for the protection of their just interests, can be regulated so as to deprive them of the power to prejudice the equally just interests of their employers. It is clear that such power is theirs, if they can force an employer either to complete a contract under conditions which entail a loss, or to throw it up under penalties. But this is, after all, an exceptional case, which presupposes that a particular body of workpeople take advantage of fortuitous circumstances to demand a rate of wages higher than that fixed by the operation of the law of demand and supply. If the wages demanded be not higher than the ruling price of labour in the market, the employer, it is true, must necessarily concede it, or throw up his contract; but in this case the hardship he suffers may be attributed to his own improvidence or miscalculation in entering into a bad bargain.

If the wages demanded be, on the contrary, higher than the ruling price of labour, the employer will, generally speaking, find substitutes for the workpeople who may leave him rather than abandon their exorbitant claims. In either case, therefore, justice will be ultimately determined by the ordinary action of economic laws; but, while the dispute lasts, great injury may unquestionably be inflicted both upon the employer and the employed; and it is clearly a matter of great moment to all parties to devise, if possible, some means of obviating the incessant recurrence of such disputes.

To discuss scientifically the methods calculated to attain that end is, Mr. Fane remarks, altogether beyond his province; but he attempts to indicate certain results, to which dissensions between employer and employed in France must inevitably lead. 'According to the ruling practice,' says Mr. Fane, 'the workman is interested only in the amount of wages he may obtain from his employer; he is not interested in that amount, relatively to the profits to be derived from the work on which he is engaged. He has, therefore, a strong inducement to force up the rate of his

wages, irrespective of all other considerations; and although he will never succeed in maintaining that rate above the market-price of labour, his attempt to do so may, under peculiar circumstances, drive away trade from the home to the foreign market, and entail at least many temporary evils. But if the workman were made a party to the contract for work—if, in other words, the wages he earned were dependent on the profits to be realised—he would take a wider and juster view of the preliminary demands which he might put forward in any particular case, and his eventual remuneration would be determined by the more or less advantageous issue of the business in which he was employed.'

But if the proposition to which these considerations lead be admitted, that labour should receive not an hypothetical share, which wages represent, but a *bonâ fide* share in the profits arising from work, the difficulties attending the practical application of that theory, as we have already remarked, are beyond doubt of a very grave and complicated nature. The first question to be decided is the proportion in which profits shall be divided between capital and labour: the second is, how labour, which has nothing to lose, can in any real sense take a share of losses—or, in other words, how far the workman can conscientiously take part in a commercial venture: the third is, what proportion shall be paid *pro ratâ* to the workman, to enable him to subsist, before any profits can be realised?

It is almost needless to remark, that numerous methods of solving these questions have been proposed, not only in France, but in England and elsewhere; and it is highly probable that they will long continue to form the subjects of economic discussion and of practical experiment, before they can be satisfactorily and conclusively answered.

Whatever opinions may be entertained, however, as regards the relative position of employer and employed in France, there is one thing very certain—that the labour-market has undergone a singular change, amongst our neighbours, during the last ten or fifteen years. The

rapid development of industrial enterprise in that country, by increasing the demand for labour in a ratio much greater than the relative increase in the sources of supply, has raised the general rate of wages in France. It is, however, necessary to distinguish between real wages, meaning their exchangeable value with reference to the ordinary articles of consumption, and money-wages. If the latter be alone considered, it may be affirmed that the average rise in the rate of wages in France during late years has been very considerable, the rate of increase having varied, however, in different trades.

In the mines and forges under the direction of Messrs. Schneider and Co., called Le Creusot, nearly 10,000 workpeople are employed, of whom only 250 are women. The annual expenditure on wages is about 10,000,000 francs. The mean rate of wages has risen, between the years 1850 and 1866, from 2 francs 50 cents to 3 francs 45 cents per diem, representing an increase of 38 per cent. Some of the workmen earn from 8 to 10 francs a day, and the wages of children, when first employed, vary from 1f. 50c. to 2f. a day. But in these and other establishments in France great facilities are given to the workpeople, at the partial expense of the proprietors, for feeding, lodging, clothing, and educating themselves and their families, which increase their nominal salaries. In the present case, 700 families of operatives are lodged by the company, at 50 per cent. below the normal rate of house-rent, and 700 gardens are let to them at the nominal price of 2f. per annum.

In the printing and binding establishments of M. Alfred Mame, at Tours, in which 1,000 workpeople of both sexes are employed, the actual rate of wages per diem ranges from 90 cents to 2f. 50c. for women, and from 3f. 70c. to 8f. for men, while the engravers earn from 10f. to 12f.

A recent quotation of the wages ruling in the great manufacturing town of Roubaix shows that good workmen are earning from 6f. to 8f., women from 3f. to 5f., and children 1f. 50c. per diem.

In a large clothing establishment at Paris, says the

report to which we are indebted for these details, directed by Messrs. Bessaud and Co., 2,000 workpeople are regularly employed; and the current rate of wages per diem is, for good workmen, from 5f. 50c. to 6f. 50c.—for inferior workmen from 2f. 50c. to 3f. 50c.; for good workwomen, from 3f. 50c. to 4f.—for inferior workwomen, from 2f. to 2f. 50c.

In the military clothing establishment of M. Dusangtoy at Paris, 3,300 workpeople are employed—viz., 800 men, 2,000 women, and 500 children, who received in wages, during the year 1866, a sum of 2,500,000f. The rate of wages for men ranges from 5f. to 10f. a day; for women, from 2f. 50c. to 4f.; and for children, from 1f. to 2f.

The general rate of money-wages may be said to have increased about 40 per cent. in the fifteen years, but this by no means implies a corresponding rise in the real wages of the workmen. The rise in the price of money-wages has been accompanied by a very considerable rise in the ordinary articles of consumption and of lodging, so that the improvement in the position of the labourer, meaning his power to supply himself with the necessaries and comforts of life, has been far from commensurate with the rise in the money-value of his labour.* Still, the relative proportions in which money-wages and the price of commodities have risen leave a margin in favour of the former; and to this extent there has been a rise in real wages, which enables the labourer to feed, lodge, and clothe himself somewhat better than he could fifteen years ago. The change in the value of money has affected, of course, equally the nominal price of labour and of commodities; and the greater relative rise in wages is the natural consequence of an increase in the capital employed in industrial enterprise, and may also have been affected by the greater facilities afforded to the labourer by the influence of opinion, and recently by legislation, to claim a larger share in the profits of production.

'The demand for labour,' says Mr. Fane, in his excellent Report, 'consequent on the impetus given to manufac-

* *Vide* Chapter XX.

turing activity, has tended to drain it from the rural districts, and congest it in the large towns. This result has been also largely promoted by the vast building operations which have been carried on by the state and municipal bodies in the great cities of France, and especially in Paris. The consequences have been very seriously felt in the agricultural districts, where the dearth of labour has at times entailed great embarrassment and heavy losses on the farmers. It does not appear that any attempt has been made to supplement the deficiency of rural labour by importations from abroad; but, on the other hand, a large number of foreign workmen — chiefly Belgian, German, and English—are employed in the manufacturing towns.'*

In the town of Mulhausen alone there are, according to reliable testimony, upwards of 8,000 German workmen, and the number of Belgians employed at Roubaix is stated to be nearly 15,000; but it is not so difficult to prove, as Mr. Fane supposes it to be, that these foreign workmen have been mainly imported for the special aptitude which they possess for certain branches of manufacture, and not to supply a merely numerical deficiency in the labour-market. 'There is,' says Mr. Fane, 'at this moment a strike among the workers in bronze of Paris; and their employers, deeming the demands made upon them to be exorbitant and inadmissible, contemplate the importation of workmen from Berlin, where the industries in bronze are largely practised.'

There is one feature, however, in the organisation of industry in France which requires special notice, and which we pointed out some fifteen years ago.† In England associations of workmen proceed on the principles that labour and capital are not only distinct, but have separate interests; that the labourer is a mere machine, whose only aim is to raise wages; that the employer is simply the agent of production, and that his immediate interest is to beat down wages. Combinations in England of this class exist, accordingly, for the support of operatives on a variety

* Correspondence regarding Industrial Questions and Trades' Unions.
† Vide *The World in its Workshops.* (Orr.)

of occasions; and the great object of trades-unions is the compulsory increase of the pay of the men, and of their wellbeing simply as consumers. The ambition of workmen in France, on the other hand, is to acquire the position of employers; they consider the labourer as the agent of production, and the capitalist as a broker; they desire especially to produce for themselves—not merely and solely to be in the receipt of wages. In France the tendency of operatives is to form associations for production, and for a common division of the profits; the idea being that labour and capital are not hostile but kindred powers, and that the united efforts of labour can effect precisely the same results as the capitalist with his men beneath him. A number of associations of this kind exist in France at the present time; and as the Revolutionary Government of 1848 favoured the principle of association in relation to labour, the majority of them took their rise at that period.

The first attempt to form associations of labour was made in France, by a M. Bachez, as far back as the year 1831. These associations were placed under a general manager; they employed workmen who were not associates; and what constituted their special characteristic was the formation of a permanent and indivisible fund, which comprised nearly the whole capital of the association, upon which no member who retired from the body had any claim. This exaggeration of a reserve fund is thought to have acted very prejudicially on these societies, which, whether from that cause, or from other defects in their constitution, were nearly all ruined in the course of a few years. One of these associations—'*La Société des Bijoutiers en Doré*,' which partook of a religious and sectional character, was founded in 1834, and which recast and amended its statutes in 1843—still subsists at Paris, and is said to be in a comparatively thriving condition.

Mr. Fane describes some of these communities of labour with considerable success, a few being instances in which employers take skilled workmen into partnership, who thus become really joint employers; some being associations of workmen, who act as masters with men under

them, but very few being *bonâ fide* specimens of joint production and division of profits. There is an interesting account of one of these associations, which may be read with instruction:—

About the year 1840, an experiment (which is cited by Mr. Mill in the second volume of his 'Principles of Political Economy') was made by a Paris tradesman, a house-painter, M. Leclaire, to give to his workmen a share in the profits of his establishment. M. Leclaire employed about 200 workmen, whom he paid, in the usual manner, by fixed wages or salaries. He assigned to himself, besides interest for his capital, a fixed allowance for his labour and responsibility as manager; and at the end of the year, the surplus profits were divided among the body, himself included, in the proportion of their salaries. But the number of workmen whom M. Leclaire admitted to this share of profits was only a portion (rather less than half) of the whole number employed. As all the workmen, however, received the full market rate of wages, those admitted to this privilège added so much clear gain to the ordinary earnings of their class, and the existence of the privilege acted at once as an incitement to exertion and a recompense of merit. It is interesting to know that this system, with which M. Leclaire expressed himself as highly satisfied in 1842, is still in operation in his establishment in the Rue St. Georges at Paris. The establishment was, however, reorganised on the 15th February 1864, and is now conducted in the following manner: There are two proprietors, Messrs. Leclaire and Defournaux, and there are fifty-nine 'associates,' and from 100 to 200 'non-associate' workmen. The benefit society (*société de secours mutuels*) of the workmen, which has accumulated a considerable capital, enters with 100,000 francs as a partner into the concern, in each of which the proprietors have invested a capital of 100,000 francs. The annual profits of the establishment are thus divided:—25 per cent. to each of the two proprietors, who receive besides a salary of 6,000 francs apiece as managers; the remaining 50 per cent. are assigned to the clerks (*employés*) and workmen, in the proportion of two-fifths to the benefit society, and three-fifths to be divided among the clerks and workmen who have rendered themselves worthy of this recompense. It is stated that the conduct of the workmen is exemplary; that the best relations subsist between them and the proprietors; and that the participation of the workmen in the profits of the establishment has exercised considerable influence both upon the rapidity and quality of the work executed.

During the revolutionary excitement of 1848, a great number of co-operative societies were formed, mostly upon principles radically opposed to strictly economic laws. The eleemosynary aid granted to these societies by the state seemed to act as a blight upon its recipients. Fifty-six societies participated in the sum of 3,000,000 francs, voted for this purpose by the Constituent Assembly; and of this number no less than forty-two societies entirely collapsed, after a brief and very precarious existence.

It is, however, satisfactory to record, that some societies formed during that period, which had the prudence and sagacity to organise themselves upon sound principles, met with the more fortunate destiny which they deserved. A co-operative association, called the '*Société des Tourneurs en Chaires*,' was founded in Paris in 1848. Its members, eschewing the popular errors of the day, would neither accept any assistance from the state, nor admit the principle of equality of wages. The work was paid for both by the piece and by the day—the best workmen drawing their wages on the former, the inferior workmen on the latter system. The association was conducted by responsible managers, appointed by the society, and removable at pleasure, but during their tenure of office unlimited authority was given to them. Under these conditions, the society has had a prosperous career. It has recently been reconstituted for a period of fifteen years, and till the end of that term no portion of the existing capital can be withdrawn.

Another society, founded in 1848—the '*Association des Maçons*'—has met with great success. It consists at present of eighty-four members, of whom two are managers, and a third assistant-manager. Of the remaining eighty-one members, two-thirds labour with the hod and trowel, and the remainder are superintendents and distributors of work, or simply holders of capital. The society employs habitually from 200 to 300 workmen, who are called 'auxiliaries,' but who have no share in the profits. The system of admitting them to participation in profits was tried, but abandoned as impracticable, owing to the im-

possibility of reconciling them to a share of losses when losses occurred. The society employs at present a much greater number than its usual complement of auxiliary workmen, as it has undertaken the contract to build a new station in Paris for the Orleans Railway, of which the cost, it is estimated, will be about 2,000,000 francs. The power to execute such a contract is a guarantee of the prosperity of the society.

The society of '*Facteurs de Pianos*' has a peculiar history of its own. It was founded, in 1849, by fourteen workmen, with a capital of 229 francs 50 centimes. It never received any subvention from the state; but, after struggling through many and untold difficulties, it possesses at the present time a capital of 180,000 francs, and does an annual business of 190,000 francs.

The society of the '*Ouvriers Lunettiers*' was likewise formed in 1849, and has been highly successful, having last year transacted business to the amount of 600,000 francs.

In 1851 a co-operative society was formed at Vienne (Isère), which was at first a manufactory of cloth, and has since added to its original establishment a flourmill, a bakery, a grocery-house, a coal dépot, and a farm. It does an annual business of above 1,000,000 francs.

There are three co-operative societies at Lyons, of which the largest—the '*Société des Tisseurs*'— comprises 1,800 members; and the '*Association des Rubaniers*,' at St. Etienne, counts 1,200 members, and possesses a capital of 1,200,000 francs.

The number of co-operative societies in Paris is thirty-nine.

There are likewise in France a number of establishments, in which the proprietors have voluntarily introduced a form of co-operation, with a view of raising the moral and material condition of their workmen. One of these, the iron-foundry of M. Godin-Lemaire at Guise, is deservedly famous. It numbers 900 workmen, who, maintaining amongst themselves the most intimate social relations, are known under the appellation of *Familière de Guise*. The proprietor constructed in 1859, at the cost of 800,000

francs, a large house containing 250 separate lodgings, let to his workmen at a rent of 3 per cent. on the capital expended. The value of this property is now being divided into shares, purchaseable by its inmates, who will eventually become its sole proprietors. M. Godin-Lemaire is about to follow the same course with his foundry. The value of the plant is to be divided into shares of 25 francs, by means of which he aims at associating the whole body of his workmen in the industrial enterprise which he directs. The primary articles of consumption are furnished to the workmen at reduced prices; their prudence is stimulated by the hope of becoming co-proprietors of the house and foundry, and ample provision is made for their instruction, and the education of their children.

The same liberal dispositions for the improvement and comfort of the workmen obtain in the factory of Messrs. Dollfus, Mieg, and Co., at Mulhouse and Dornach, the former of whom founded the building society of Mulhouse, known as the '*Société des Cités ouvrières.*' The same remarks will apply to the establishment of Messrs. Schlumberger and Co. at Guebwiller, and to that of Messrs. Bourcart and Co. in the same town; to the shoe-manufactory of M. Savart at Paris; to the factory of Messrs. Steinheil, Dieterlen, and Co., at Rothau; and to the establishments of the Orleans Railway Company, and that of the '*Chemins de fer du Midi.*'

There are several other establishments in which the workmen, besides receiving facilities to procure food, clothes, lodging, and education for themselves and their families on the most advantageous terms, are allowed to share in the profits of business, generally by means of rewards or prizes, representing a percentage of profits, allotted to them at the end of the year by the proprietors. These rewards, however, are voluntary gifts on the part of the employers to the employed, and they do not involve the application of co-operative principles, in the strict sense of the term; but these establishments are deserving of mention, because their influence has promoted, to a certain degree, a friendly alliance between capital and labour,

and has raised the moral standard of the large body of men they employ.

Towards the close of the report of Mr. Fane, we find the following practical remarks, which we willingly cite:—

It would appear that there is, if not an antagonism, at least a competition of interests between capital and labour, when distinctly represented in a joint enterprise, which, except under moral conditions which cannot be predicated as normal, tends fatally to interfere with their harmonious co-operation. It would also appear that the combination of skill and labour cannot in the present day successfully manufacture without the aid of sufficient capital; and the deduction from these propositions is that the workman should aim at becoming in some measure a capitalist himself, before he seeks to become a co-operator with capitalists in industrial enterprise.

And he concludes with the cheering remark:—

I am led to touch upon the enquiry, as to whether the facts which have been under consideration suggest the probability of France becoming a dangerous rival to England in the commercial competition of the world. I venture to think not. As regards the wealth and enterprise of her capitalists, and the energy and industrial aptitude of her people, England has no reason to fear a comparison with France; while, as regards the command of mineral wealth, and the possession of experienced knowledge in commercial and industrial enterprise, the advantage is clearly on her side.

As regards, moreover, the labour-market, the state of which is of vital importance in estimating the conditions of industrial success, it appears to be similarly affected by the same cause in France as it is in England. In both countries employers and employed enjoy the right of combination for the purpose of influencing the rate of wages. In both countries the exercise of this right, which is now as common in one as in the other, has confused the cause, and checked the prosperity of trade. In both countries the question of devising means for the harmonious co-operation of capital and labour forms a commercial and social problem of the first importance, and on a wise solution of that problem the prosperity of national industry appears principally to depend.

Strikes and Combinations in Prussia.

DURING the present century Prussia has treated industry in three different ways, and legislation on this important subject has, therefore, proceeded on three distinct principles. In the years which followed the terrible disaster of Jena, the genius that emancipated the land betook itself to emancipating labour; the mediæval crafts and guilds that hitherto had been established throughout Prussia were abolished by Stein and Hardenberg: and Prussian citizens were allowed to engage in almost every occupation, with no qualification but a license, imposed as a tax for fiscal purposes. An extraordinary impetus was given in this manner to Prussian industry, but between 1845 and 1849 a marked reaction set in. The state in Prussia not only endeavoured to regulate industry at its will, but shackled it with a series of impediments. Licenses began to take the form of monopolies; the old guilds and crafts were practically revived, the period of apprenticeships was extended, examinations even for trades were adopted, and attempts were made to restrict the number of workmen employed in some occupations, and in some cases to confine them to one. At the same time combinations of men to raise wages were made criminal, for otherwise, when artificially limited, labour would have been able to dictate its own terms; and an analogous rule was applied to masters, apparently from a dislike of free capital. This false system was long upheld by powerful interests in the Legislature; and the history of Prussian industry of late years is that of a struggle of enlightened men against these absurd and pernicious arrangements. The contest has been long, but reason at length has triumphed over ignorance and prejudice. Since 1865 labour in Prussia has been set almost free; guilds, crafts, and similar monopolies have been broken up; and, above all, the mischievous checks on the free diffusion and supply of labour have been removed without exception. With this change, the former laws against combinations have been repealed, and men and masters may now coalesce with the view of

affecting the rate of wages. Such associations, however, as in France and Belgium, become illegal if violence, intimidation, deception, or falsehood are practised, or if the rights of others are infringed, and offenders are liable to severe penalties.

Trades-unions, as we understand them in England, do not exist in Prussia or, indeed, in any part of Germany. 'If,' writes Mr. Morier,* 'under the term of "trades-unions" is meant a society, the distinctive character of which consists in the funds of such society being applicable indiscriminately to "benefit" purposes, and to so-called "trade" purposes, this form of association is unknown in the Zollverein. It could hardly be otherwise in a country in which benefit societies are under the immediate control of the state, whereas combinations for the purpose of influencing wages have hitherto been illegal.'

In Prussia the interference of the state in the matter of benefit societies for the working-classes is not confined to the mere negative function of supervision, but is, on the contrary, of a very positive kind. It calls these societies into life where they do not exist, draws up their statutes, and not only compels the workmen for whose relief they are founded to subscribe to them, but forces the employers to double the amount contributed by the workmen. In 1860, the Journeymen Relief Unions of Prussia, to which this compulsory character is attached, numbered 2,219, with 157,664 members, and an income of 124,752 thalers. The Factory Operatives' Mutual Relief Unions numbered 719, with 170,847 members, and an income of 835,176 thalers. Other miscellaneous relief societies, all of them equally under the control of the state, brought up the whole number to 3,644, with 427,190 members, and a yearly income of 1,361,919 thalers.

The Prussian law at the same date, however, punished with fine and imprisonment any workmen who combined for the purpose of obtaining concessions from their employers by refusing to work. These facts clearly show

* Correspondence regarding Industrial Questions and Trades' Unions.

that the objects for the combined attainment of which the system of trades-unions has been established in England, are in Prussia necessarily dissociated from each other, and it is this dissociation which constitutes the radical difference between the conditions under which the problem of labour in relation to capital presents itself in the two countries.

Whatever unions may, therefore, have existed in Prussia for the purpose of maintaining strikes, or exercising a direct pressure upon employers, must have been, owing to the Combination Laws, of a secret kind. No such societies, indeed, have existed, at least none upon a scale of any importance and magnitude; and the history of the strikes which have occurred in that country, during the last twenty years, fully corroborates the fact. These strikes have been few in number, and, when tested by the English standard, appear to have been of the most insignificant kind. Ten days is the longest period for which any one of them lasted, and only in a very exceptional case did the number of operatives who struck reach 1,000.

The laws affecting labour in Prussia have not, however, during the greater part of this century, ceased to occupy the attention of the Prussian Legislature; and the Prussian Statute Book contains an interesting record of the various phases of opinion which have alternately prevailed on this vital question. These phases may, therefore, be placed under three principal heads:—

1. The period of perfect industrial freedom, inaugurated in the first decade of the present century by Stein and Hardenberg, as part of their scheme for the regeneration of Prussia, after the collapse at Jena.

2. The period of reaction to this policy of freedom, which may be divided into—first, the more specifically bureaucratic reaction embodied in the legislation of 1845; and, secondly, the reaction as shared by the industrial classes themselves, and embodied in the legislation of 1849.

3. The present period, which may be described as that of the simultaneous emancipation of the Executive, the Legisluture, the industrial classes, and the general public from the reactionary influences of the preceding period. Two important Acts, passed

in the last session of the Prussian Parliament, may be looked upon as the firstfruits of this period, namely:—1. An Act repealing the provisions of the law of 1845 against combinations amongst employers or their workmen; and 2. A law investing co-operative associations with corporate rights.

The legislation (says Mr. Morier),* of the first of these periods was undoubtedly far in advance of its age. Indeed, when we contemplate the chaos of economical fallacies in which, up to a very recent date, most European codes where involved, it is difficult to realise the fact that the simple language in which the Prussian statutes from 1806 to 1811 take for granted the cardinal doctrines of political economy, proceeds from the lawgiver and not from the student. The principle which should underlie all laws affecting labour is laid down in an edict of 1808, as 'that of the utmost possible freedom in the production as well as in the distribution of wealth.' In accordance with this principle, the law of 1811 removes all industrial disabilities, thereby virtually breaking up the whole system of guilds, then flourishing in the utmost luxuriance, and reduces the machinery of production to the elementary form of free contract between employer and employed.

Every Prussian citizen became free to exercise what trade or profession he pleased, when and where he pleased; to employ, at his option, unskilled workmen or indentured apprentices; to fix by common consent with such apprentices the terms of their indenture, the premium to be paid, or the wages to be received. These equal rights had, however, a corresponding obligation attached to them, in the shape of the licensing system,† then for the first time introduced, and which, although at the time excused by the pecuniary necessities of the state, has remained in vigour ever since. The license of 1811, however, was a purely fiscal measure. It had neither the character of a monopoly, nor that of administrative control. Every person who desired to exercise a trade had to pay for a license, which could not be refused to him, and in virtue of which he could exercise his trade in every portion of the kingdom under the protection of the laws.

The Industrial Code of 1845 is, however, framed in a spirit

* Correspondence regarding Industrial Questions and Trades' Unions.

† *Gervert Steuer*—literally, trade-tax.

the very reverse of the enactment of 1811. Freedom is the main element of the latter; control, restriction, and protection are the principles of the former. The fiscal side of the licensing system is retained, but for many trades the system assumes, in addition, the form of a concession, the granting of which lies with the authorities. The guilds, which former legislation had reduced to mere shadows, once more find favour, and an attempt is made to bring them back to life. New guilds also are created, whose statutes are framed by the Minister of Commerce, and the old ones are reformed in conformity with the new. The principle of examination is introduced. No one can become member of a guild without having passed an examination, and these examinations are placed under the control of the guilds. Lastly, the Industrial Code of 1845 contains provisions against the liberty of combinations as well amongst masters as amongst workmen, and the repeal of which by the law passed this year has inaugurated a new era in the industrial world. These provisions are as follow:—

Persons exercising a trade, or engaged in manufacture, who endeavour to move their journeymen or workmen, or the authorites, to certain acts or concessions, by previously concerting to suspend the exercise of such trade, or to dismiss or refuse work to such journeymen or workmen as may not submit to their demands, likewise such persons as shall urge others to a combination of this kind, shall be punished by imprisonment for a term not exceeding twelve months.

Journeymen or operatives who endeavour to move their employers, or the authorities, to certain acts or concessions, by previously concerting for the purpose of refusing to work, or of preventing work from being done for one or more employers, likewise such persons as shall urge others to a combination of this kind, shall be punished by imprisonment for a term not exceeding twelve months. The provisions of this paragraph likewise apply to workmen engaged in mines, or on roads, railways, fortifications, and other public works.

Operatives, journeymen, or apprentices, forming themselves into associations without the permission of the police, are to be punished—the founders and presidents of such associations by a fine of 50 thalers (7*l.* 10*s.*), or imprisonment for a term not

exceeding four weeks; the remaining associates by a fine of 20 thalers (3*l.*), or imprisonment for a term not exceeding fourteen days.

Journeymen and operatives who wilfully, and without a lawful cause for so doing, abandon their work, or who withdraw from the business in which they are engaged, or who are guilty of gross disobedience, or of obstinate insubordination, shall be punished by a fine of 20 thalers, or imprisonment for a term not exceeding fourteen days.

The law of the 9th April 1849 goes a great deal further in the direction initiated by the Industrial Code of 1845.

Compulsory examination becomes the rule, whether the candidate for admission into a trade intends or not to become a member of a guild, or to indenture apprentices: and penalties, in the shape of fine and imprisonment, are attached to the exercise of the vast majority of trades without a certificate of examination. An apprenticeship of three years must have been served before the journeyman's examination can be passed, and a journeyman must have worked three years as such before he can pass his examination as master; he must, moreover, have completed his twenty-fourth year. A master can only employ journeymen and apprentices of his own trade, and journeymen can only seek employment with masters of their own trade. Foreigners can only exceptionally be admitted to the exercise of a trade.

The idea underlying the legislation of 1845 is that of protecting labour against capital. With this object in view, it had recourse to the singular method of hampering the free action of that portion of the working-classes whose prosperity was for the time being the most directly threatened, not indeed by capital as such, but by the new channels of investment into which capital had begun to flow. The phenomena which excited the fears of the legislators in 1845 and 1849, and made them seek remedies in restrictive enactments, had their origin in the revolution caused by the rapidly-increasing efficiency of factory labour, or production *en masse*, as compared with handicraft

labour or production in detail; and the distress which began, in consequence, to make itself felt amongst the classes which furnished the latter form of labour, was the evil which was sought to be removed. Mr. Morier observes on this head:—

To act logically, therefore, in this illogical crusade against capital, it would have been necessary to attempt at least to restrain the competitive power of factory over handicraft labour, by loading the former with disabilities, instead of which the attempt was made to restrict competition amongst the handicraftsmen themselves, leaving the millowner more completely than before master of the field. The Industrial Code of 1845, and the law of 1849, make up together a very complete system of restriction, in regard to all trades exercised by handicraftsmen as distinct from factory operatives; but protection, and not restriction, was the object sought to be obtained, and of this protection as against the real competitor (viz., the millowner), there is absolutely no vestige; for the paragraphs which appear to place the latter under a *quasi* restraint, in so far as he may not employ journeymen outside his factory, and the like, are really exceptions made in his favour. The public cannot get its work done otherwise than through a master-workman; the millowner, by virtue of these paragraphs, can within the walls of his mill employ all labour, skilled and unskilled, journeymen or operative, indiscriminately. Nor are any rules laid down to distinguish between manufacture and trade. Every kind of production can be carried on, either in the mass by mill-hands, or in detail by journeymen and apprentices. The master-workman who has served out his apprenticeship, worked his three years as journeyman, passed all his examinations, and paid all his fees, finds restrictions on all sides, is confined in the choice of his workmen, and tied down to the statutes of his guild. The capitalist, who has wherewithal to set up a mill, is free in all his movements. It would, therefore, be difficult to find another instance of legislation which, having otherwise nothing to recommend it, had so totally failed in even approaching the mistaken object it had in view.

The movement of 1848, in Germany, was characterised by the shock of opposite currents of opinion, which extended beyond the mere field of political excitement. As in the political field, however, the ideas of individual liberty and self-government came in contact with the idea

of the central executive necessary for the purposes of unity, so in the economical field the ideas of industrial freedom, free trade, free associations, &c., came in contact with the restrictive ideas of organisation of labour, protection to national industry, and the like; and the first result of the participation of the working-classes in political life, consequent upon the events of 1848, was unquestionably (as has been instanced in the law of 1849) in a direction adverse to the true principles of political economy. Fortunately for Prussia and for Germany, there were found, amongst the leaders of the Liberal party, those who possessed the greatest influence over the working-classes,—a body of sound political economists, who, as the advancing tide of reaction forced them more and more from the field of politics proper, turned their attention to the social and economical questions which were propounded, but left unsolved, during the Revolution of 1848.

To the movement inaugurated by this body of men may be directly traced the great reforms completed, or in course of completion, in Germany, in connection with the questions we have mentioned. The free-trade movement, for instance, which found its expression in the French Treaty; the co-operative movement, which has covered Germany with a network of credit banks, enabling the artisan to borrow money on the same terms as the millionnaire; the agitation which has led to the emancipation of the working-classes from the penalties attached to combination, are all of them vibrations from the central movement, which, emanating from MM. Schultze-Delitzsch, Michaelis, Faucher,* Prince-Smith, and others, proceeded systematically with the work of popular economical education; and, whilst unshackling the productive forces of the country from the fetters of bureaucratic restriction, simultaneously set free the producers from the social fallacies by which they had been long enslaved. Let us, however, cite the remarks of

* M. Faucher, for some time an exile in this country, was connected with one of our morning papers. M. Faucher is a sound political economist and in some respects, an original thinker.

Mr. Morier on this head; they are deserving of attentive study. He says:—

A central politico-economical congress, which had its affiliated societies all over the then Confederation, met once a year alternately in the various states of Germany, took cognisance of all practical questions of economical reform, and caused these questions to be agitated in the several Legislatures of the Confederation in a common spirit, and in a like direction. Side by side with this body were the general assemblies of the co-operative societies, and the workman's education societies, each with their network of affiliated branches, and each worked by the same body of men as those who presided over the more purely scientific politico-economical congress.

The method of reforming and amending the laws affecting labour in Germany would, therefore, seem to proceed from the general to the particular, and not from the particular to the general—the inverse direction to what ordinarily takes place in this country. It does not emanate from a pressure exercised upon the Legislature from without, by operative riots and secret associations, forcing on a piecemeal legislation; but a systematic movement towards economical reform, in accordance with general principles, emanating from the educated minority, and gradually extending over the vast human area, whose common assent to any general proposition constitutes public opinion.

'It is necessary,' says Mr. Morier, 'in an enquiry into the state of the labour question in Germany, to note this fact, in order to seek for the solutions of existing problems, and the forecasts of the future, where they can alone be found, in the conscious teaching of the few rather than in the unconscious stirrings of the many—in the lecture-room rather than in the workshop.'

A return to the principle of perfect freedom in the relations between employer and employed—freedom for capital, freedom for labour, and (on the part of the working-classes) the application of this freedom to the purposes of co-operative associations, upon the principle of *self-help*, as opposed to the principle of *state-help*—such, described in a few words, was the programme with which the

economist reformers appealed to the country. 'Man,' says M. Schultze-Delitzsch, 'comes into the world vexed with certain wants, but endowed with the faculties required to satisfy those wants. All he has a right to demand is a free use of those faculties—individual liberty, liberty to associate and combine with his fellows. The economical function of the state is to guarantee this liberty.'

A just conception, however, of the law lately passed in reference to strikes and combinations, and of the relation in which the principal parties in Prussia stand to it, will best be obtained by glancing at the Parliamentary phases through which it previously passed. In 1862 and 1863, MM. Faucher and Michaelis submitted two bills to the Prussian House of Representatives—one for an entire repeal of the laws of 1845 and 1849, and the other for the substitution of a new Industrial Code.

In 1865, also, MM. Schultze-Delitzsch and Faucher introduced a short bill, repealing certain portions of the law of 1845 and of the law of 1860. The portions repealed made it penal both for employers and employed to concert for the purpose of obtaining concessions, the one from the other, by lock-outs or strikes. Section 183 of this law made it penal for workmen to join associations, except with the permission of the police. Section 184 made it penal for workmen to withdraw from their work without lawful cause—*i.e.*, made a breach of contract on the part of the workmen a criminal offence. The bill was carried in the House of Representatives by an overwhelming majority, as brought in by MM. Schultze-Delitzsch and Faucher. It was subsequently thrown out by the Upper House. The Prussian Government, however, who were mainly instrumental in throwing out the bill, were by no means opposed to the principle it embodied; but, on the contrary, were, under certain conditions, willing to further the ends its authors had in view. The declaration of the Minister of Commerce fully corroborates the truth of these remarks. That functionary said:—

The proposed measure had occupied the serious attention of the Government, who had come to the conclusion that an alteration

of the law in the sense of the bill was desirable; that this, however, involved interests of such great importance, and considerations of so wide a scope, that, in the opinion of the Government, the materials as yet collected were not sufficient; and that they had, in consequence, determined to institute, on their own account, a searching enquiry, and moreover to appoint a Commission, to be composed of members of both Houses of Parliament, and of employers of labour, as also of workmen; which commission should enquire into the whole subject of the laws affecting labour, and report whether, besides the negative measure of repeal now contemplated, some positive means of improving the condition of the working-classes—such, for instance, as the encouragement of the principle of association—could not be hit upon by the Legislature.

The associations to which the Minister* referred were co-operative associations, credit banks, and productive associations. The Commission announced by the Government met in the autumn of 1865, under the presidency of the Minister of Commerce, whose declaration, just cited, led to its formation. It consisted of thirty-four members, of whom twenty belonged to the class of 'employed,' either as master-workmen, or journeymen, or factory workmen. The remaining ten included two members of the Upper House, two of the House of Representatives, M. Borsig, the proprietor of the great locomotive factory at Berlin, and other representatives of the employer-class. The system upon which the Commission worked did not consist in taking evidence, and reporting upon it, but in discussing, after the manner of a debating society, a number of propositions, and then putting these propositions to the vote. The questions or propositions discussed were twelve in number, of which nine had reference to the subject of strikes and the Combination Laws. The remaining three had reference to co-operative societies, and the means of ameliorating the dwelling-houses of the working-classes.

The Commission gave their decision, by a large majority, against compulsory recourse to arbitration, and in favour of the creation of mixed commissions, to which disputes might be referred at the option of the parties. M. Müller,

* Count Itzenplitz.

proprietor of a large printing establishment, deposed that a court of referees, created on their own account by the printers of Berlin, and not connected (like the Councils of Industry) with the state, had been perfectly successful, both as regards the settlement of disputes between masters, and also between these and their workmen.

Two questions, however, gave rise to an exceedingly animated debate—the first being, 'Can the regulations with respect to obligatory examinations, and the conditions required prior to such examinations, be maintained after the repeal of the law which restricted employers in the selection of their workmen?'

This question gave rise to a long and interesting discussion, from which it clearly appears that the emancipation of industry from the shackles imposed upon it by the system of compulsory examination, is what most preoccupies the attention of the working-classes. Among the workingmen on the Commission, several, who had been for many years practically connected with the system as examiners, spoke strongly against it, as not fulfilling the purpose for which it was intended. M. Hasselbach, however, expressed himself warmly in favour of the working of the system, but gave his opinion that, if the Combination Laws were repealed, the whole system of examination must likewise be repealed. If the workmen can combine to obtain a maximum of wages, the employer must be free to obtain workmen where he can find them. There is, therefore, no middle road between the legislation of 1845 and 1849, and that which a repeal of the Combination Laws will inaugurate. If the principle of restriction be once interfered with, all restrictions must be swept away.

The second question runs thus: 'Would the proposed repeal render necessary the removal of hindrances limiting the right of free settlement; and does the tax levied by communes on persons not being members of such communes, who come and settle therein, place serious obstacles in the way of the free movement of the working-classes?'

During the course of the discussion, the President of the Commission gave a sketch of the law of settlement in Prussia.

The principle that every Prussian citizen has a right to settle where he chooses is laid down expressly in the law of December 31, 1842; the only exception to the free exercise of this right having reference to persons who have undergone criminal sentences, and who may, in consequence, be restricted in the choice of their domicile by the police —and to paupers, who, if they cannot support themselves, may, within a year of their change of residence, be sent back to their original commune.

An important practical limitation to this right was, however, introduced by the laws of 1853, 1856, and 1860, which sanctioned the levying of a communal tax, in the shape of an entrance-fee, on all persons not natives of a borough who come to settle in it. This tax was limited, in boroughs with 2,500 inhabitants and less, to 3 thalers (9*s.*); in boroughs with a population between 2,500 and 10,000, to 6 thalers (18*s.*); in boroughs with a population between 10,000 and 50,000, to 15 thalers (2*l.* 5*s.*); and in Berlin to 20 thalers (3*l.*). It was urged that this tax acted very injuriously, in limiting the free movements of the working population, and consequently the flow of labour in the directions in which it was wanted; and that the communes, besides using the tax as a source of revenue, had largely had recourse to it for the purpose of preventing the immigration of strangers. The result of the debate was a unanimous vote in favour of a removal of all hindrances in the way of the free circulation of labour.

There were some important statistical data collected by the Commission, as a groundwork for their discussion, by which some idea may be formed of the extent to which strikes have prevailed in Prussia during the last twenty years or so. From these statistics, it appears that from the year 1845 to the year 1865, the law in question was enforced throughout the Prussian monarchy twenty-nine times, and that on many other occasions proceedings were commenced, but were either abandoned, by the parties arranging their differences under the mediation of the authorities, or broke down from the want of the evidence

required to establish the 'previous concert' which constituted the offence.

The strikes which gave rise to these proceedings do not appear, except in a very few cases, to have been of any importance, the majority of them having been limited to refusals to work on the part of the journeymen and apprentices for individual masters. The most important cases were in the great manufacturing centre—Elberfeld, Burmen, and Dusseldorf—and those, during the twenty years in question, were only five in number. In one case, 1,000 factory hands struck work; in another, nearly 900. The longest duration of any of these strikes, however, was only ten days; and in four out of the five cases, the organisers were punished with short terms of imprisonment.

The following is the draft of law which the Government presented to the two Houses of Parliament in the session of 1866, as the result of the enquiry which they had announced in 1865, and the principal features of which we have already noticed. After repealing several articles in the Industrial Code, it goes on to state that—

2. Agreements between persons who exercise a trade, or are engaged in a manufacture, entered into for the purpose of compelling the journeymen or workmen in their employ to certain acts or concessions by stopping work, or dismissing such journeymen or workmen as may not submit to their demands, are not legally binding on the persons who enter into them. The same applies to agreements entered into by journeymen or workmen. for the purpose of compelling their employers to certain acts or concessions, by ceasing to work, or hindering work from being done.

3. Whoever shall by bodily coercion, by threats, by injuries against honour, or by laying under a ban, move, or endeavour to move, others to take part in such agreements, or to give effect to them, or whoever shall by similar means prevent, or seek to prevent, others from withdrawing from such engagements, shall be punished by imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months, excepting always cases for which the General Criminal Code provides heavier penalties.

4. The provisions apply equally to the categories of workmen and employers enumerated in the law of April 24, 1854, and to

employers and workmen connected with mines, roads, railways, fortifications, and other public works.

This bill, having passed both houses of the Prussian Landtag, has become the law which will for the future regulate the combinations of workmen in Prussia.

Workmen in Austria.

Strikes are strictly prohibited by law in Austria, and therefore rarely occur; but when the first signs of their existence are given, they are immediately put down by the police, the ringleaders being liable to imprisonment for a term of from eight days to three months, according to the provisions of the Penal Code of that country.

The superabundance of labour in Austria renders any combination by the workmen against the masters of rare occurrence. A case, however, occurred some time ago, when the workmen of the Trieste Railway objected to the appointment of a particular person as foreman over them, and left work in a body because their protest was not listened to. The police at once interfered, and the whole number were arrested, and kept in prison for twenty-four hours. Their employers, however, simply expressed themselves anxious to get rid of them, and did not desire that they should be punished.

The section of the Austrian Penal Code applying to strikes and combinations runs thus:—'481. Combinations of miners and ironworkers, mechanics, workmen of the above-mentioned employers, of apprentices, servants, or especially labourers, in order, by a general refusal to work, or by other means, to extort higher daily or weekly wages, or other conditions, from their employers, are misdemeanours, and the ringleaders are to be punished by from eight days' to three months' severe imprisonment. The same are also to be removed, according as they are natives or foreigners, out of the crown-lands, or from the whole empire.'

Workmen in Italy.

The provisions of the Italian Penal Code against combinations, whether of workmen or of employers, for the purpose of unduly raising or lowering the wages of labour, are severe. In the latter case the offence is punishable with imprisonment for a maximum term of one month, in addition to a fine, varying in amount from 100 to 3,000 francs. In the case of operatives and labourers, on the other hand, entering into combinations for the suspension of work, or for an increase of wages, the penalty is imprisonment for a period not exceeding three months.

Strikes are not frequent in Italy. Those which are recorded to have taken place in late years were in Piedmont: a strike of the carpenters and joiners of Turin in 1860, and again in 1863, for higher wages, but without success in either case; of the masons and bricklayers of Turin in 1861; of the woollen-weavers of Biella, which lasted eighteen days, and was then terminated by a compromise with the masters; of the porters (*facchini*) of the free port of Genoa, for the maintenance of their monopoly, in which they were successful. At Naples, in 1861, a strike of the men in the ironfoundries, for increase of wages and reduction of time, terminated by a compromise at the end of a month; and some other strikes, of no great importance, among the journeymen tailors, printers, and cabdrivers.

Trades-unions in Italy have not the same character as they have in England, and, generally speaking, it can scarcely be said that they are organised with a view to the regulation of the conditions of labour. The Society of Compositors at Florence, perhaps, comes nearest to these conditions, its declared object being to maintain a fixed scale of payments for work; and, by one of its rules, the members are bound to leave any establishment where a lower rate is adopted.

The principal object of the associations of working-men which exist in Italy is, in all cases, the relief of their members in case of illness; besides which, many of them have various secondary purposes—such as the support of the old and infirm, and the assistance of widows and

orphans, education loans and advances, the supply of articles of consumption or raw materials to members at prime cost; they also provide for funeral expenses.

The Italian Government has published a statistical account of these societies;* they are divided, throughout the kingdom, in the following order:—

	Number of societies	Number of members	Annual income
			Francs
Piedmont	175	86,971	463,188
Lombardy	83	28,865	572,238
Parma and Piacenza	8	2,322	39,721
Modena, Reggio, Massa	24	3,892	28,990
Romagna	34	10,262	74,194
Marches	19	6,359	33,989
Umbria	14	2,957	14,787
Tuscany	55	16,808	142,313
Naples	19	5,506	14,154
Sicily	8	1,718	16,298
Sardinia	4	1,048	11,514

The expenditure of these societies was as follows:—

	Francs	*Cents*
Management	163,667	89
Relief in illness	424,373	42
Medicines and medical advice	29,083	84
Pensions in old age	54,671	45
Assistance (widows and orphans)	29,121	53
Sundries	87,076	81
Total	787,994	94

Of the aggregate number of 443 societies, 267, with 85,495 members, admitted as associates persons belonging to all professions, and 155, with 26,113 members, were restricted to particular trades. Prior to the year 1848, there were in existence 66 societies, several of which were of ancient origin: between 1848 and 1860, 168 were created; and from 1860 to 1862, 209 were established.†

* *Statistica del Regno d'Italia, Società di Mutuo Soccorso.* (Anno 1862.)

† *Storia della Società di Mutuo Soccorso d'Europa dalla loro origine fino ai tempi nostri.*—Per GIANTOMMASO BECCARIA DA MONDOVI.

The Italian Penal Code, as applied to combinations amongst workmen and employers, has the following clauses:—

385. Any combination among employers of labour, for the purpose of unjustly and abusively compelling their workmen to accept a reduction of wages, or to receive commodities in whole or part payment, if such combination has been followed by some overt act in execution of it, shall be punished with imprisonment not exceeding one month, and a fine of not less than 100 or more than 3,000 francs.

386. Every combination among workmen, for the purpose of suspending or impeding any work, or increasing its cost, without reasonable cause, shall be punished with three months' imprisonment, whenever it has begun to be carried into effect.

387. The chief instigators or promoters, in both cases, shall be punished with imprisonment for a period of not less than six months.

388. The disposition of the three preceding articles are applicable to landlords or tenants who, without just cause, combine for the purpose of lowering, or fixing at too low a rate, the day-wages of farm-labourers, and to farm-labourers who, without just motive, combine to raise their day-wages.

Workmen in Genoa.

There are in Genoa forty-seven workmen's associations or trades-unions. The majority of these unions are, however, more occupied with political than with material matters, and limit their duties to assisting their members when ill or out of work. As to strikes, there never has been a general one in any trade, as the unions have neither the means, nor the influence with the trades they profess to represent, necessary to maintain a serious strike. Workmen, however, employed by individuals occasionally strike, but they are generally unsuccessful, as no simultaneous action is organised; such strikes, therefore, are an injury both to employers and employed. The one successful strike on record was that of the '*Facchini*' of the Porto Franco, who resisted the admission of labourers not belonging to their guild, and were allowed to carry the point through the weakness and want of decision of the municipal body of Genoa. Thirty-one of these associations

are of a comparatively recent date, as the following list fully testifies:—

	Founded in
1. Degli Operai, detta 'Generalo'	1850
2. Caffettieri, Liquoristi e Birrai	1856
3. Lavoranti, Vermicellai	1852
4. Indoratori e Verniciatori	1851
5. Falegnami, Ebanisti, Tornitori, Cassari, &c.	1852
6. Facchini di Ponte Spinola	1851
7. Calzolai	1851
8. Calafutti e Maestri d' Ascia	1851
9. Fornai	1862
10. Cordai	1862
11. Fabbro Ferrai e Macchinisti	1861
12. Sarti	1852
13. Stampatori e Litografi	1862
14. Carpentieri	1851
15. Scultori e Intagliatori in Legno	1862
16. Marinai e Lavoranti nel Porto	1862
17. Tipografi	1851
18. Orefici, Gioiellieri, Argentieri	1863
19. Cartai e Legatori di Libri—Lavoranti	1863
20. Cuochi e Camerieri	1863
21. Facchini, Ponte Reale e Mercanzia	1863
22. Superstiti dei Mille (Associazione Fraterna d'Assistenza)	1863
23. Parruchieri	1851
24. Capellai	ancient
25. Barcajuoli	1857
26. Muratori	1851
27. Conciatori di Pelle	1861
28. Associazione Generale di Mutuo Soccorso	1850
29. Commessi di Commercio e Scritturali	1851
30. Filarmonici	1851
31. Associazione di Mutuo Soccorso tra gl' insegnanti di ambo i Sessi	1862

Workmen in Naples.

Trades-unions have not as yet attained any important character or development in Naples. There is, however, one trades-union (of which Guiseppe Garibaldi is perpetual honorary president), formed of several branches, each branch being composed mainly of workmen of a distinct trade. In 1860 there were twenty-eight of these branch associations—at present there are about half that number. The president of the trades-unions is Signor Tavassi, a jeweller by trade, and a man of remarkable eloquence

and great influence.* Though professing violent democratic opinions, he is believed, in political feeling, to have more leaning to the so-called *Consorteria*, or old moderate party. Not more that 2,000 working-men are members of this union. The executive or directing council is composed of a president, two vice-presidents, and a fluctuating number of deputies or '*console*,' elected by the members of the various branches. The union does not interfere with the separate administration of the branches, but has a general control over them.

The objects of the union are stated to be mutual assistance (*mutuo soccorso*), also to improve trade, to assist working-men, and to avoid strikes by endeavouring to conciliate disputes, but never to assist them by pecuniary support. A credit bank supplies small articles to those in want, anticipates payments, and provides for those suffering from accidents; and as the executive council attends to the avowed objects of the union, it may be said to work well. This union, however, has not any great influence over, nor does it enjoy the confidence of, the majority of the working-men.

Strikes are very rare in Naples, the principal of which occurred in 1860-61, when upwards of 1,000 workmen employed in the ironfoundries struck for an advance of wages, reduction of time, and other demands. This strike was brought about wholly at the instigation of the executive council of the trades-union, at that time just springing into existence from the Garibaldian *régime*, and under the direction of a president of strong democratic opinions. The result of the strike disappointed the promoters; the masters of the ironfoundries closed their works, and refused to hold any communication with the executive council of the union; the men received little if any assistance from the union, and, unable to continue the contest, begged to be taken back. A compromise, however, was agreed to, a day's working-time being reduced from eleven to ten hours; only a few of these men have

* Signor Tavassi has, we believe, been examined by the Royal Commission on Trades' Unions sitting at Whitehall.

since belonged to the trades-unions, from joining which they are discouraged by their employers, though not absolutely prohibited from doing so. A benefit society for sickness and accidents, managed entirely by the workmen, exists in nearly every one of the large establishments, to which the men contribute about 1 per cent. per week of their wages, but of the funds one of the masters is trustee.

'The operatives, as well in Naples as in the large cotton and flax-spinning factories about Salerno and Avellino' (writes Mr. Bonham, our Consul-General at Naples), 'are described to me as intelligent, docile, and well-disposed. During the last ten years a considerable augmentation has taken place in the rates of wages, and the masters appear to entertain no apprehensions of strikes or combinations. There have been, however, during the last few years, strikes among the journeymen tailors, printers, street-sweepers, and coach and cabmen; but in no one of these cases has any combined action been brought into operation for their support, and, after a short time, the differences were arranged, generally by a compromise.'

The most singular (to follow the same authority) and most inconvenient strike was that of the coach and cabmen, who struck in consequence of an order, issued by the municipal authorities, which regulated the style of their dress. On this occasion many of them were imprisoned, and accused of acts of intimidation; but the inconvenience to the public was so great that, after a few days, the authorities released them, on the men engaging to adopt the desired dress within a fixed period; they failed, however, to keep their engagements, but nothing more was said on the subject.

Workmen in Piedmont.

Workmen's associations exist in nearly every town in Piedmont, especially in the manufacturing districts; but in the towns (as in Turin), these associations are in principle 'benefit societies,' and have but little influence on strikes, owing in some measure to a want of special organisation, and likewise to the limited number of members enrolled in

the separate trades-unions. These societies are founded upon the authority of the 32nd article of the statute which proclaims the right of peaceful meeting; but unless they submit to a certain amount of official control, as is the case with other charitable institutions, they are rather tolerated than recognised by the Government.

The benefit societies of Turin are thirty-four in number, and the most important of these is the '*Associazione Generale degli Operaji di Torino*,' composed of workmen of all trades, containing from 8,000 to 10,000 members, and possessing an annual revenue of over 5,000*l*. This is strictly a benefit society, and disclaims all connexion with political or other agitation. Its members are entitled to medical and pecuniary assistance in case of sickness, and to purchase, at reduced rates, bread, wine, and other articles of daily consumption at stores established by the society. The '*Società Generale degli Operaji*,' a sister association, under the same management, and established on the same principles, numbers 2,000 members.

The trades' societies are in general founded on religious corporations of an earlier date. Their operations are ordinarily confined to granting medical and other aid in sickness, and finding employment for members out of work, but in some cases mutual instruction (not, however, carried on upon a very extended scale) is included in the aim of the society. The principal unions of Turin are those of the 'Journeymen Bakers' (which number 322 members), the 'Cooks and Hotel Waiters,' the 'Journeymen Confectioners and Coffeehouse Attendants,' and the 'Tailors.'

Strikes in Piedmont, according to the most trustworthy evidence, have been few, and generaly unsuccessful. In 1860, the carpenters and joiners of Turin struck for higher wages; in 1861, the masons and bricklayers also were out on strike; and in 1863, the carpenters and joiners struck a second time. This latter strike lasted a month, but in neither year were the men successful. The most important strike, however, in Piedmont was that of the woollen-weavers, at Biella, in 1864, for an increase of wages, promoted by a trades-union which had been a benefit

society. Troops were immediately sent to Biella to preserve the peace; the chief manufacturers went to the spot, in order to effect a settlement; and, after eighteen days, the men, finding that assistance (which had been promised from England and France) was not forthcoming, gave way, and accepted an arrangement, which appears to have been satisfactory to both sides. There has been no strike since.

Workmen in Lombardy.

The system of trades-unions and co-operative societies in Lombardy has been in operation for upwards of sixty years, the oldest of these bodies being the '*Pio Instituto Topografico*' of Milan, which dates as far back as 1804. Numerous societies were formed after the liberation of the province in 1859, some of which, however, had but a short existence; others have maintained themselves more or less successfully, and, at the present time, few trades or professions in Lombardy are without their co-operative societies. The practical working of these various societies may be said to differ considerably; for, left entirely to their own resources, without government advisers, the rules of many were found to be based on wrong calculations: promises were made which could not be fulfilled, and, thus discredited, many lost the support they would otherwise have found.

In order to remedy this evil, and with a view of promoting and extending the system of trades-unions, the Savings Bank of Milan offered, in 1863, three premiums—one of 3,000 francs, the second of 2,000 francs, and the third of 1,000 francs—to such trades-unions of Lombardy which, by a clear statement of their administration and working, should be considered to have best attained the object for which they were established. Twenty-two societies responded to this offer, and the first prize was awarded to the '*Pio Instituto Topografico*' of Milan; the second prize, of 2,000 francs, was awarded to the 'Servants' Co-operative Society' of Milan; the third prize, of 1,000 francs, was awarded to the 'Workmen's Co-operative Society' of Lodi. In the

year 1864, the Commission increased the number of prizes to thirteen (seven of 1,000 francs, and six of 500 francs), open to every province of Italy: sixty-six societies sent in statements, the first prize being awarded to the 'Workmen's Co-operative Society' of Lodi.

The different trades-unions of Lombardy are not, however, in a position to allow themselves the costly satisfaction of indulging in strikes, and, although such instances have occurred, they very seldom take place, and would naturally only be of short duration. The system of strikes appears, in general, foreign to the habits of the province.

Strikes in America.

Our experience of strikes in America is principally confined to those that periodically occur in New York, which are limited to a certain class of working-men. These strikes occasionally entail great misery upon those who participate in them, and inflict a serious injury upon the peace and prosperity of that city. Some of these strikes are got up through sheer wantonness of feeling, or (to use the conventional slang of the day) for the express purpose of 'having a spree with the funds of the society.' Both Irish and German immigrants are the victims of these strikes, and fall an easy prey to those who take the lead in them, and who may be said to be the 'wire-pullers of the movement.' The Irishman, however, is generally a more prominent participator in the New York strikes than the German; and his excitable nature, being relieved from the pressure of poverty, which he sensibly feels while at home, breaks out into the wildest and most ungovernable excesses, when he begins to 'feel his feet' in the great Atlantic city.

As a proof that strikes, among the labouring classes in New York, spring more frequently from mere wantonness of feeling than from presumed necessity or design, we may mention that when the labourers, the carpenters, bricklayers, masons, dockyard and long-shoremen struck for higher wages in June last, the majority of them were receiving $2\frac{1}{2}$ dollars per day; while provisions, and the

general means of subsistence, were but a trifle higher in price than corresponding commodities were, at the same time, in London or in Paris. When on strike, each man receives, from the funds of the society to which he belongs, five dollars per week; and though these societies hold their meetings at different places in New York, and have, apparently, different administrations, they are affiliated in spirit, and have mostly a combined and simultaneous action. The five dollars per week, however, paid to men on strike, very soon reduces the exchequer of the society, and brings it to a state bordering upon bankruptcy. But the shoals of fresh immigrants periodically pouring into New York, and the pressure exercised upon them by old and experienced hands who have preceded them, very quickly recruit the funds of the society; and the result is that the employer of labour in that city has inflicted upon him a greater alternation of prices, demanded by the employed, than the same class of capitalists have in any city in Europe.

During the strike in June 1867, there was nothing to be heard in Baxter Street, and other parts of the city, but noisy brawls and quarrels among the members of the society; and the part that each member took to expose the tricks of his neighbour, or companion, made it clear, to those who were outside the 'charmed circle,' that the 'society' was by no means a perfect model of propriety and prudence in economical matters. Many of the men on strike would go to work, in the next street or so, for the same sum they were receiving from the society as a dole; and yet, on the sly, would appeal to the society for the five dollars' weekly allowance, as though they could not possibly get work to do. The money thus obtained went, for the most part, to the publichouse or beershop; and the workmen—the recipients of these degrading doles—had a saying, to the effect that, 'As they got the money without working for it, there was no harm in drinking what they got.' The poor Irish immigrants, however, with scarcely a shilling in their pockets, and who were arriving by about 12,000 per week, were no sooner landed than they were made to join

the society—otherwise they were prevented from obtaining employment in New York. And it was Irishmen who thus pitilessly persecuted Irishmen, an incident which makes good the old saying, that if you want to roast an Irishman, there is no difficulty in finding another Irishman to turn the spit.

The societies of working-men in New York have, however, in a great measure beaten themselves, through the shortsighted policy they have been in the habit of adopting. If the old members, when out on strike, had given the needy emigrant the money which they wantonly spent in beershops and elsewhere, he might probably have held out, and have refused wages which were considered too low by the society-men. But, instead of acting in such a common-sense and practical way, the society-men demanded from the immigrant, as the price of his admission to their body, fifteen dollars as entrance-money, and that sum was generally paid before the immigrant was allowed to work at his trade or calling in New York. This, however, was far from being the case generally, for the poor immigrant, in fifteen cases out of twenty, had scarcely a shilling after the termination of his voyage out; so, being in this position, without money and without friends, he stealthily sought employment, and took the first work he could obtain, and at a wage which was not regulated by the trade-society's dictation. The fresh supply of labour which is almost steadily flowing into New York is, therefore, a considerable check upon strikes, and this is becoming more manifest every day. Upon the last occasion of a strike, which we have just mentioned, when the old hands thought fit to return to their work, the employers, in a great number of instances, flatly refused to turn the new hands away, and thus, for almost the first time, the old hands were severely punished for their folly. The fee, for instance, to the long-shoremen's society is 30 dollars; and, unless you make friends, it is difficult to get into that body, and through them to obtain work. The long-shoremen in New York number about 30,000.

The strike of the men connected with the building

trade at Chicago, in the spring of 1867, was also a complete failure; and as it was intended as an example for the action of other bodies of workmen in the different states of the West, its failure was of considerable importance to the working-classes of America. The masons and carpenters struck for the reduction of hours from ten to eight as a fair day's work, and several states—New York, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, &c.—passed a law to the effect that eight hours should be considered a fair day's work. But the masters at Chicago refused to comply with the men's demand, and laid down the principle that if time was reduced wages should be reduced also; and that, though the state legislature might regulate time, they should have no control over wages. The men stuck out for about ten weeks, but they were beaten, and went in at a reduction of wages proportionate to the reduction of time. The failure of this strike had a salutary effect upon the workmen of America, and is likely to have for some time to come.

A strike also took place amongst the moulders at the great Reaping Machine Manufactory, Husick Falls, on the Hudson, at Albany and at Troy. This class of workmen is in great demand in some parts of America, and, the supply being proportionately small, the wages they obtain are much higher than those paid to other men in the same establishment. While, for instance, a moulder is receiving three dollars per day, the carpenter, the fitter, and, the forger are only receiving two or two-and-a-half dollars per day. This solely arises from the close combination of the moulders, and their limited number in proportion to the employment there is for them; and the results of these combinations are highly injurious, not only to the masters, but to the men also. Take the strike, for instance, at Husick Falls, to which we have alluded. There are in that establishment upwards of 500 hands, exclusively employed in making reaping and mowing-machines; and when the moulders stop work, all the other men must stop also. Indeed, the whole establishment is at a deadlock, and a great sacrifice of time and capital is the consequence.

The Messrs. Woods, the heads of the firm to which we allude, were not so fortunate as the master-builders were at Chicago, and are obliged to submit to whatever demand the moulders may make upon them. And as this firm turns out about fifty reapers per day, the loss sustained by strikes such as we have mentioned may be readily imagined. During the last eight or ten years, there has been imported into this country nearly 10,000 of these reapers and mowers; and those who have seen them work, as we have, will come to the conclusion that we have a certain interest in wishing for a diminution of the moulders' strikes at Husick Falls. The Messrs. Woods are the largest reaping and mowing-machine manufacturers in America, and turn out some excellent work, as the reapers imported into this country, and which work so effectually in cutting our crops, fully testify.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WHAT TRADES-UNIONS REALLY ARE.

If we closely enquire into trades-unions, and study the rules by which they are governed, or the spirit in which they are worked, we can scarcely fail to come to one conclusion—namely, that they are a costly delusion and a deceitful snare to the majority of those who belong to them. These unions, however, are spreading far and wide, and are intruding themselves into every nook and corner of the domain of industry; and as they already occupy the entire area of skilled labour, and are quietly taking possession of the mind of the unskilled portion of the industrial fraternity, the time may shortly arrive when not a single trade or pursuit involving labour but will be under the directing influence of these unions.

The evidence taken before the Royal Commission,* and the two subordinate Commissions, fully corroborate the fact of the extension, and furnish a pretty clear insight into the nature and tendency of these associations. As to the number and extent of trades-unions, it appears, from the evidence of Mr. Mault, secretary to the General Builders' Association, that there were, at the last census in Great Britain, 856,472 persons immediately connected with the building trades. Of plumbers, glaziers, and painters, it was estimated that 8,000 were connected with the unions, or about 9¾ per cent.; of brickmakers only 2,500 were connected with unions, or about 6 per cent.; and of labourers and other trades not mentioned, there were, in the aggregate, about 18,000 connected with the unions. This estimate

* Reports of the Commissioners appointed to enquire into the Organisation and Rules of Trades' Unions and other Associations in London, Sheffield, and Manchester (1867).]

gives a total of 90,000 unionists belonging to the building trades, or about 10½ per cent. of the whole number of operatives connected with them.

In some districts, however, unionism is much more concentrated than it appears to be in those which are indicated by Mr. Mault's figures. In Glasgow, for instance (according to Mr. J. M'Donald, president of the Master Builders' Association), there are between 80 and 90 per cent. of the men connected with the building trade who are members of the unions; and, taking in all departments of trade, there are little short of 80 per cent. Another witness states that the proportion of unionists in Manchester, in the joiner's trade, is 90 per cent.

It is not, however, so much the number as the nature of these trades-unions that we are desirous of investigating—what is their effect in an economical point of view; and whether the ends that they seek, and the means that they employ, are consistent with the principles of good government, and a due respect for the rights and liberties of individuals.

One of the most moderate and best-regulated of these unions is, we believe, the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners; and the rules of this society may, therefore, be taken as a fair average type of those by which the great body of unionists are guided and governed. Mr. Applegarth, secretary to the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, said that the society consists of an executive council and branches. The executive is elected by the branches in London; each branch consists of seven or more members, in any town where they think proper to establish themselves. The society has 190 branches. Its income for 1865 was 10,487*l.*, and its expenditure 6,378*l.* The object of the society is the mutual support of its members in case of sickness, accident, superannuation, burial, emigration, loss of tools, being out of work, and extreme distress. A candidate for membership must be in good health, of good character, a good workman, have worked five years at the trade, and be under forty-five years of age. He is entitled to 15*s.* a week, if he leaves his employment on

terms satisfactory to the branch or executive council. The executive council never originates strikes, but gives its opinion as to the propriety of strikes, and, if it approves of them, affords assistance when needed. It receives reports every month of the rate of wages and state of trade all over the country, and is guided by the general state of the whole society in giving or withholding its assent to a strike. The secretary disclaims, on behalf of the society, any persecution or annoyance to non-union men, or any compulsion as to the number of apprentices employed. But this society will not allow any workman to take work offered by a customer of any employer after his day's work. When a man has done his day's work he has done sufficient. They believe the man to be thoroughly selfish who does more. 'If every man is to be left to do as he likes,' they say, 'the sooner the society is dissolved the better.' They do not know the effect of the society upon employers. 'In this selfish world the employers look out for their own interests, as well as we do for ours.' One-third of the society's income is spent in supporting strikes. When a man disobeys the rules, he ceases to be a member of the society. The subscription is one shilling per week, but an extraordinary levy may be made, and must be paid. If not paid, the defaulter ceases to be a member of the society, and loses altogether the whole benefit of his subscriptions.

The question arises, Is this association, which may be deemed a model of mild and prudent regulation—or, at any rate, it presents a favourable contrast to the Painters', the Bricklayers', and the Masons' Unions—beneficial to its members? Does this organisation really present to the workingman any equivalent for what it demands of him? We shall endeavour to answer these questions. Each member of the association, it will be seen, pays one shilling per week, which, properly invested, would yield something considerable in due course of time. The association, however, has two objects in view; it is an ordinary benefit club, and also a trade-society. These objects are incompatible with each other, and the perfect attainment of both is an utter impossibility. A member, for example, who

has for years been a subscriber, with a view to relief in old age or sickness, may, by failing to pay a single instalment, lose all that he has previously subscribed. This rule is exceedingly severe, and should not be tolerated by an association in which a provident care for old age or sickness was the principal object to be attained. But irregularity of payment is not the only cause of forfeiture. The taking of piecework, or the working overtime, will, we believe, equally deprive a member of the fruits of his savings; and he, therefore, binds himself to obey the rules of the society, whatever they may be, under penalty of forfeiting the savings of a lifetime.

In fine, he sells himself into slavery—not to law, but to human will (says a distinguished writer), and undertakes beforehand to submit to, and to ratify, whatever a majority may decide—and, be it observed, a majority of a great part of which he can know nothing. A levy may be made for a strike of which he does not approve—for a strike made by one trade, not for any grievance of its own, but to help another trade which may feel itself aggrieved. He is responsible, to an unlimited extent, for whatever may be decided on in his behalf. The majority in the trades-union can assist a strike for any object it thinks proper; there is no limitation to its power.*

The benevolent element in trades-unions is, however, quite subordinate to the trade element, if such a term may be applied to their peculiar proceedings. One-third of the expenditure of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners is devoted to payment for strikes, which must be deducted from beneficial and provident purposes. The expenses of management vary from 20 to 40 per cent., to say nothing of the risk of a special levy. The result of this disproportionate expenditure upon strikes has rendered the financial basis of this society utterly unsound. Upon this part of the subject, the evidence of Mr. Mault is both interesting and explanatory, of which we willingly avail ourselves. The fixed payment of one shilling per week, says that gentleman, is insufficient to secure the benefits specified in the rules of the society. Taking for his guide the

* *Quarterly Review*, No. ccxlvi.—article, *Trades' Unions*.

tables in the Registrar-General's Report, he finds that a young man aged 20, who pays 2*l.* 12*s.* per annum until he is 50, will be then entitled to an annuity of 11*l.* per annum, or, deducting the ordinary expenses of the management of a friendly society, to one of 9*l.* The Amalgamated Society would give him one of 20*l.* 16*s.*, besides benefits to many times that value during the years elapsing between 20 and 50, and besides an inevitable funeral payment of 12*l.* To put it, however, in another way, a young man ought never to lose a tool, never to be out of employment, never sick, and pay 2*s.* 4*d.* a week from the time he was 20 to the time he was 50, to secure the superannuation benefit alone. This is, of course, the most favourable case for the society, and the insufficiency of the subscription is more and more palpable the older a man is at his entrance. The misfortune is that, until the time that these superannuation benefits begin to be paid, from the very nature of things, the balance in hand belonging to these trades-unions will get larger and larger, and consequently the chances are that the society will get larger and larger; and if there is anything in the calculations of such eminent actuaries as Mr. Neison or Dr. Farr, as published in the Registrar-General's Report, we need not point out how these societies must come to ruin; and there is little doubt that, the longer they last before that inevitable consummation occurs, the more widespread the ruin will be.

Let us, however, turn to the other side of the question, and see what are the advantages which can counterbalance this state of things, and compensate union members for such a sacrifice of their individual freedom. They are taught to believe that they advance the rate of wages, and secure to themselves a larger income than otherwise they could have obtained. Their great desire is to control the actions of their employers, and to make their fellow-workmen subservient to their views and aims. It is tyranny of the rankest nature, and of the most selfish character. There is an utter absence of that community of feeling and interest between employer and employed which ought to exist, and which would lead to their mutual

benefit. But such a notion as a community of interests has no place in an unionist's mind. His aim is to get as much out of the wage-fund as possible. He never troubles himself whence this fund was derived, or what are the conditions of its continuance. He concerns himself exclusively with its division, and is not over-scrupulous as to his employer getting the moiety which is due to him. He never considers whether the members of his union may not be diminished in number by a fall, or increased in number by a rise in wages. He never for a moment troubles himself about the causes which may increase or diminish the capital of his employers, or reduce the numbers of those who wish to employ him. He has a dim and vague notion that their number is fixed, and that their capital is limitless.

Under these circumstances, the unionist considers the rate of wages obtained as a mere matter of organisation and agitation.

As the amount of the spoil of the master depends upon the united efforts of all (says the writer we have just quoted), he logically infers that it should be divided equally among all. He does his best to fix a minimum of wages, and to fix it so high that it becomes practically the maximum. It seems just to him that, as wages are more in the nature of the spoils of a civil war than of remuneration adapted to skill and industry, the better workman should be paid less than he deserves, in order that the inferior workman may be paid more. In this spirit it is that piecework and overtime are proscribed. The pretence put forward, that it is done in justice to the employer, and that by the very persons who tell us that in this selfish world employer and employed must each take care of themselves, is too manifestly hollow and insincere to deserve attention. The real cause of the objection to piecework and overtime is the one we have mentioned—the view that wages being determined in their amount by importunity and combination, they form a fund for the general benefit of all, and that the fund gained by the contributions and exertions of all ought not to be encroached upon by the superior strength and dexterity of a few. To anyone accustomed to the most elementary principles of political economy, to state these views is to refute them. We have touched the fallacy which lies at the bottom of this whole system.

The conditions which regulate the relations of capital to labour are fixed and immutable, as they rest upon the laws of nature. But, while these conditions are firm and stable, the real state of the relations of labour and capital is peculiarly transient and changeful. The question, therefore, for those who wish to raise the wages of labour is, not how to divide the existing wage-fund in a manner more favourable to the working-man, but how to increase competition for his labour among employers? This proposition is condemnatory of the whole policy of unions, and it is as true as it is condemnatory. The manner, however, in which these unions obtain a rise in wages puts into operation a set of causes which have a direct tendency to lower them. The price of labour must depend, like the price of everything else, on the demand for it. The demand for labour depends on the rate of profit. If profits are high, fresh capital, as we have already remarked, flows into the trade; and the real cause, therefore, of a high rate of wages is a high rate of profit. Conversely, if profits are low, capital is withdrawn from the trade and seeks investment elsewhere, the demand for labour slackens, and wages must fall.

The policy of trades-unions has been denominated as selfish, and it is essentially so. It looks exclusively to the rise of wages, and seldom directs its view to profits, except for the purpose of diminishing them. The apprehension that the employer is accumulating a large fortune out of the business, from which the employed draw but a moderate share, is a constant torment to unions. They forget that those large profits are sure to attract competitors, and thus indirectly to benefit the working-man; while, if they do not, no one has so strong an interest as the working-man himself in not forcing profits down to a point which will drive capital out of the trade, and so diminish the demand for labour. Now, the main efforts of the unions are directed towards reducing the demand for that very labour, the value of which it is their avowed desire to enhance. They strike for an advance. If the strike be resisted, they waste a large portion of their own money,

and that of the society, to which they must look in sickness and old age.

Every week (says the 'Quarterly Reviewer') that the strike lasts, they and their supporters become poorer and poorer, and therefore more urgently demanding employment, the excess of the demand for which over the supply is one of the causes of a lowering of wages. If they reduce, as they must do in case of success, the profits of their employers, they so far diminish the inducement to enter the trade, and therefore the demand for their labour. If the strike actually take place, they waste the interest on fixed capital which lies idle, they throw the whole machinery of production out of gear, and most likely drive the whole or a portion of the trade to other spots, or perhaps to foreign countries. They think they are gaining a victory over their employers; in reality, their triumph is over themselves. *Ex uno discere omnes.*

The source of the incomes of trades-unions mainly consists of weekly subscriptions, entrance-fees, and fines, the latter being imposed upon members as infractions of rules. The weekly payments consist of sums as low as, and sometimes less than, one shilling, with a small contribution to a benevolent fund. The fines vary according to circumstances. For instance, the Amalgamated Engineers impose a fine of 5*s.* for obtaining employment for a non-society-man without the consent of the president or officers; 10*s.*, and in some cases 20*s.*, for working piecework without sharing the surplus profit with the other workmen, and a number of other sums for various offences against the rules. Expulsion, involving the forfeiture of past contributions and future benefits, is the penalty for nonpayment of fines. But the most singular part of these penal arrangements is the exaction of heavy fines from such employers as disobey the provisions of the union code. As much as 40*l.* has been levied and paid, as a single fine, by a master under terror of a heavier fine; and even the expenses and loss of time of the delegates, who wait upon the manufacturer to apprise him of the judgment they have come to, are extorted by the same process. In the latter instance, capital is made to bow with implicit obedience to labour—an incongruity which it is difficult to reconcile with one's ordinary sense of the justice and fitness of things.

The gross income of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers—which numbers upwards of 33,000 members, increasing at the rate of 2,000 to 3,000 per year, and having 308 branches in the United Kingdom—is stated to be 86,885*l.* The expenditure of this society, in 1865, was 49,172*l.*, of which 18,000*l.* was paid to members out of work. The accumulated fund of the society is about 140,000*l.*

These (says a very able writer)* are large figures, the union itself being much the largest of those connected with the building trades; but it must be remembered that it is not by the abstract amount of the income, nor even by the present annual excess of receipts over disbursements, that the financial soundness of a provident society is to be judged of, but by a comparison, such as an actuary would make, between the assets of the association on the one hand, and the engagements and liabilities undertaken by it on the other.

As the primary object of unions is to raise the rate of wages to the highest possible point, the means for attaining that end are a series of rules, which form the laws of the unions. The principal of these are as follows:—

1. The imposition of a certain *minimum* rate, below which wages shall not fall. The employer is not precluded from paying a higher rate than this standard to workmen of superior skill or ability, but he is prohibited from paying a lower rate to any man, although he may judge him to be an inferior hand. And even though the workman may be willing on this account to take less, he is not allowed to do so.

2. The limitation of the hours of labour. Whatever moral or sanitary grounds may be urged in support of this claim, it is clear that when workmen demand a reduction of the hours of work, without a corresponding decrease of pay, it is simply equivalent to asking a higher rate of wages.

3. Prohibition of piecework. The objections made by several of the witnesses to this mode of working were based on its tendency to produce inferior and dishonest

* *Edinburgh Review*, No. cclviii.—article, *Trades' Unions.*

workmanship; but the more candid admitted that their dislike was founded on the fact that it formed too great a stimulant to exertion on the part of the men, and opened the eyes of the masters to what men working for their own advantage could do—thus furnishing an inducement to lower the pay of those who worked by time.

4. The introduction in certain cases of machinery, and of methods by which hand-labour may be economised.

5. The prohibition of the employment, even to the smallest extent, of any class of workmen in any matter beyond the strict line of their own special division of labour; and, with a similar view, the limitation within each district to the use of materials worked or prepared by the labour of that district.

6. Regulations having for their object to check the zeal and rapidity of workmen, who might be inclined to get on too fast* with their work, and thus raise the standard of efficiency against their fellows, to the advantage of the employer. Such, for instance, as 'chasing,' *i. e.* going ahead too fast, in the mason's trade, and other curious restrictions—such as those against carrying too many bricks at a time, walking too fast to their work, the 'walking-time' being charged to the employers' account.

7. The limitation of the number of apprentices, in proportion to the journeymen employed, and a similar restriction on the employment of boys; the rule being fixed, in both cases, not with reference to the efficiency of the labour, but to the supposed interests of the other workmen.

8. The exclusion of non-union men from working along with, or in lieu of, unionists. This is a leading feature with a large number of the unions, and it goes to the root

* Cases illustrative of this rule occur in almost every workshop in London, and no doubt in the country also. A clever active workman in the employ of Messrs. Gillows, the well-known cabinetmakers, was given a screen to finish, which would take an ordinary workman three days. The man to whom we allude finished it in two-and-a-half days, and, as he anticipated, to the satisfaction of his employers. Not so, however, to the foreman, who reported the case to his club; and the man was dismissed for working too quick, and was reminded of it in shops in which he worked afterwards.

of the controversy between the advocates of union principles and their opponents.

It has been maintained, by a certain class of writers, that the effect of the union system, regarded in reference to its action upon the rate of wages, has operated to enhance that rate. We differ in opinion with these writers. We have endeavoured to show that the various wants and interests of mankind provide for the division of the surplus, which remains after defraying the cost of production, into profits and wages; how a self-acting machinery, by the temptation of high profits, tends to raise wages when trade is good, and to lower them when it is bad; how vain it is to interfere with these laws, and how unfailing are the causes which make all such attempts either superfluous or mischievous. This is the task which trades-unions have set themselves to perform, and have fenced themselves round with rules, which we have just cited, for that exclusive purpose. Had there been no unions, however, the general prosperity of the country, its large increase of wealth, and the consequent extra demand for labour, were quite sufficient to cause the rise in wages which has taken place during the last eight or ten years, without the intervention of unions, which have done nearly as much to retard as they have to advance the rise.

The grand aim of trades-unions, through the medium of strikes, is, however, to obtain for labour an undue share of a definite quantity of produce, which is the joint result of both capital and labour. It is not the maximum of production that the unionists aim at, but the maximum share in a given amount of production. This is the point at which they desire to arrive, and, rather than miss it, they willingly accept the alternative of diminishing the total aggregate of production by limiting the supply of labour, not as regards the actual number of labourers, but as regards the quantity and quality of the labour supplied. This object is effected by diminishing the hours of labour, and fixing certain standards of work; or, in other terms, by equalising as much as possible the distribution of wages, and by fixing a standard of capacity, calculated on a medium

quality of labour, beyond which it is not in the interest of the *many* that the *few* should work. Those, therefore, who are gifted with superior intellectual or industrial power must not use it to its full extent; they must dwindle and dwarf that power, to suit the condition of their less gifted inferiors. Mediocrity is to rule the world, and a premium must be awarded to incapacity!

As the unionists, however, seek an increasing proportion of profits on existing capital, in the shape of wages, it is not to be wondered at that they do not dread the effects of lengthened strikes and lock-outs, their waste of capital, and their necessitating consumption without production. For, admitting that the result of these strikes is permanently to raise the rate of wages—which is the hypothesis on which they rest—the capital expended by the unions is refunded to their members in the shape of these higher wages. The community, however, is the poorer, to the extent of the wealth unproductively consumed. It is, likewise, poorer to the extent of the artificial diminution in the efficiency of labour, kept up with a view to lessen the supply of that commodity. What, therefore, the individual unionist gains the public loses, as in the case of all monopolies. This may in some measure be compensated for by the increased wellbeing of the select body of workmen who compose the unions; and the comparative ease of the majority of unionists is, perhaps, not paid for too dearly by the restricted liberty and the impeded energy of the minority. To what extent, however, the whole labouring class, including non-unionists, is affected by the slower rate of increase in the aggregate wage-fund, which must be the necessary result of trades-unions, is a question deserving of the most serious consideration, and must undergo a searching enquiry before the problem of capital and labour can be satisfactorily solved.

The Reports of the Commissioners furnish a mass of evidence of the *modus operandi* of the unions in different parts of the kingdom, and the difficulty is to make the most pertinent selection, so as to fitly represent the actions of those bodies. The unions rest upon force and coercion,

and upon a contempt and disregard of the liberties, the rights, and the feelings of others; and the outrages which have startled and amazed the country are not fortuitous results of mere depravity, but the inevitable effects of the feelings and convictions which trades-unions excite. An example or so from the evidence will fully illustrate our meaning. It appears that a father is forbidden to employ his own children to work for him, without making them members of the union. 'We, the operative plasterers of Bradford, do hereby give you notice, that all your sons that are working as plasterers, which are above 21 years of age, are requested to join the society, and, failing to do so, all our men will cease work on Monday morning, and not return again unless you pay all expenses of the strike.' (Q. 2971.)

Mr. Dixon, master-plasterer, Bradford, received the following missive: 'We wish to inform you that you have not complied with our request, therefore we wish you to do so to-night, or all our men will leave work on Monday morning. P.S.—Please send an answer by six o'clock.' The request was for 21*s.* entrance-money for Mr. Dixon's two brothers, who were working at the trade without belonging to the union. Mr. Dixon, being under heavy contracts, was obliged to comply, and paid down the money at once. (Q. 2979.)

The union does not permit the master the choice as to which of his men he shall discharge. 'A master was requested by the union to discharge two apprentices rather than two society-men. He discharged the two men, and his work was "picketed" in consequence.' (Q. 2957.)

A bookkeeper repainted the letters on a rod by which the work of Messrs. Worthington and Challinor, painters, was measured. They received the following note: 'Sirs, It having been brought before the meeting on Monday night that your bookkeeper has been doing some writing and painting, you are requested not to let him, he not being a painter.—The Committee, Blackpool Operative House Painters' Association.' (Q. 3988.)

During a bricklayers' strike, a Mr. Robinson, of Darlington (a master), set to work to lay his own bricks. The

labourers said they must leave off work, as they were ordered by the lodge not to carry any material to an employer so long as the strike continued. So Mr. Robinson had to give up doing his own work. (Q. 2997.)

These examples of the contempt for the rights and feelings of others, on the part of unionists, is quite sufficient to show the animus which ordinarily directs them; but this is not so bad as the want of faith in the execution of agreements. We have seen, in the recent instance of the operative tailors, a trial put off on the application of the defendants, on their undertaking to remove the pickets placed over the masters' shops, and, when the object had been gained, the agreement deliberately broken. The operative bricklayers of Birmingham agreed with the masters to submit differences to arbitration, with power to appoint an umpire. The rule was recently acted upon, and the men, by a resolution, pledged themselves to abide by the decision. The umpire decided against the men, and they, instead of submitting, immediately struck. (Q. 3047.)

The Bradford lodge of the Labourers' Union have this rule: 'You are strictly cautioned not to overstep good rules, by doing double the work you are required by the society, and causing others to do the same, in order to get a smile from the master. Such foolhardy and deceitful actions leave a great portion of good members out of employment all the year round. Certain individuals have been guilty, who will be expelled if they do not refrain.' Wages must therefore be paid by the average, and not by the worth of the individual, and any attempt to attract notice and win distinction is met by expulsion. (Q. 3120.)

Espionage of the vilest kind is practised in some of the unions, as the following rule of the Leeds Bricklayers' Labourers' Lodge will testify: 'Any brother of the union professing to carry more than the common number, which is eight bricks, shall be fined 1*s*. Any member knowing of the same shall be fined the same, unless he gives the earliest information to the Committee of Management.'

The masons prohibit the use of machinery for dressing stone, and consequently two valuable patents for obtaining

a smooth surface (one by grinding, the other by sawing), remain almost useless. (Q. 3209.) Masons also refuse to use machine-made bricks, and have a rule against the introduction of wrought stone, even from neighbouring quarries. This causes a great loss, for the stone is softer and easier wrought when first quarried. Mr. James Lord, of Heywood, allowed his masons, as work was scarce, to work stone in the winter. These very men struck work in the spring against the using of this very stone in different buildings, and thus inflicted great loss on their employer. (Q. 3216.)

The carpenters of Blackburn gave notice to the builders, on the 16th of November 1866, that they would not fix any machine-made work or mouldings that were worked outside Blackburn on any job inside Blackburn, as they considered that there were plenty of machinists in Blackburn who could do the work just as well as people elsewhere (Q. 3217.) The Plasterers' Society wrote to Mr. Peacock, of Scarborough: 'The operative plasterers are bound not to work with any bricklayers, or to cover any work of any description that has been previously commenced by any person or persons but plasterers. If you wish to finish your job with plasterers, you must stop the bricklayers from plastering.' (Q. 3279.) Some bricklayers passed by the works of Mr. Day, of Bolton, and found a carpenter enlarging the holes left for the posts in the brickwork. Mr. Day was fined 2*l.*, which he paid. (Q. 3280.) The aperture for a door had to be altered. The carpenter, who was waiting till it was done to put in the frame, pulled out some loose bricks. The master, Mr. Colbeck, was fined 2*l.*, which he paid. A building at Powicke was being erected by bricklayers, some of whom lived on the spot and some at Worcester, four miles off. The Worcester men asked for walking-time—that is, the walk should be counted in the day's work. This was granted. The same allowance was asked for the men on the spot who had no walk, and when this was refused a strike took place. (Q. 3263.) The masons object to gaslight, and the brickmakers insist that all bricks shall be made of the same size. Of the humane

feelings of the unions we have several examples. Here is one:—Two men had refused to join in a strike at Glasgow. One was allowed to make his peace with the union by a payment of 30*s.* From the other they would take no fine. The expression was, 'We shall wring the bowels out of him.' He was at last readmitted on a payment of 3*l.* His offence was that he had spoken against the strike. He owed his pardon to his employer, who refused to desert him. (Q. 3516.)

Such is the power of trades-unions; and the next question of importance is—How do they use that power? The union, it has been well said,* 'forms a court which acts on *ex parte* information, and without local knowledge. Thus the masons of Carlisle and Exeter, for instance, decide on the wages that shall be demanded by the masons of Wolverhampton, guiding themselves, not by the circumstances of the trade, but by the necessities of the employers.' The object is, the writer continues, to find a place where labour is in demand, to withdraw the labour by a strike, and to counteract the tendency of other labourers to flow thither by 'picketing;' thus at once cutting off a source of employment, and depriving the whole trade of the benefit which the tendency of labour to go where it is most wanted must otherwise produce. Mr. Russell, of Bolton (says the Report), was fined 5*l.*, which he paid, by the operative bricklayers of Bolton, for setting a mason to widen a window, which he could not get finished because the bricklayers were drinking, and would not work. Of course he had no opportunity of being heard before the tribunal which imposed the fine, consisting, as in all probability it did, of the delinquents themselves. Mr. Stone, of Newton-in-the-Willows, was fined 15*s.*, because his foreman remonstrated with his men for talking and smoking when they should have been at work, and the foreman's son was fined 5*s.* for taking part with his father.

Well may the *Quarterly Review* exclaim:—

> Let anyone read these instances, abridged from many more which were laid before the Royal Commission, and ask himself whether

* *Vide* an able exposition of trades-unions in *Quarterly Review*, No. ccxlvi.

there is any principle of personal liberty, of fair-play between man and man, of justice, or of honesty, which these bodies, in their self-constituted omnipotence, do not infringe? Supposing we knew nothing of trades-unions except what is now told us, could we believe that their excesses were limited even to such cases as these? What reflecting man would doubt for a moment that the means of compulsion would grow in violence and atrocity just in proportion to the resistance encountered? People accustomed to go in their own way, and to go in it by such means, are not likely to suffer themselves to be defeated, while anything was left untried which could strike terror into their intended victims. People who deliberately set themselves to starve a fellow-workman because he will not strike, or to ruin an employer because he prefers to manage his business himself, instead of carrying it on under the dictation of the union, are not likely to stop there if that does not succeed. From such conduct to actual violence the step is short and certain.

The Sheffield outrages, with their diabolical surroundings, fully prove the truth of these remarks. The unionists of Sheffield—at least those who were connected with the crimes disclosed by the recent investigation, and perhaps those who sympathised with the perpetrators—were little better than deliberate assassins; and although it was deemed necessary, for the ends of justice, to grant the latter certificates of indemnity, the moral stain upon their character is as indelible as though they had suffered the extreme penalty of the law. Yet, such is the moral obliquity of certain minds, that they find a good even in the vilest evil—an oasis in the driest desert. The Sawgrinders' Union took six hours to discuss Broadhead's resignation, and refused to accept it. This model union went further than that: they passed a vote of confidence in his favour, and requested him to retain office. Yet, according to his own evidence, he kept hanging about him certain miscreants, who were ready and willing, for a few pounds, to murder their fellow-men, who had committed no offence against them. And they did murder their fellow-workmen.

The brickmakers of Manchester are, perhaps, a shade better than the sawgrinders of Sheffield; it is, however,

but a shade. The principles of the brickmakers are more artfully framed than are those of the sawgrinders, their means of enforcing obedience being carefully graduated, from pecuniary fines up to murder. When the lesser penalty is imposed, it is simply a warning that the maximum of punishment may be inflicted. In one sense the Manchester bricklayers are absolute and tyrannical; they will have no employment of non-union men, no machine-made bricks, no transference of bricks from one district to another, and no payment for labour except what they please. The evidence on the Commission of Enquiry, on all these points, is exceedingly curious. We give an instance or so. A master-brickmaker, not a member of the union, is forced to pay them 1*l.* a year, in order to be allowed to work at his own trade. They have an alliance with the bricklayers, so that no bricks can be laid of which they disapprove. They fine a master 5*l.* for complaining of their work; he pays the fine, and considers himself well treated because they have not destroyed all the property they might. They forbid a master who has 300,000 bricks on the Ashton side of the canal to send them to Manchester, and a violation of this rule they visit with the destruction of 40,000 bricks. Needles are put into the clay by thousands, to lame the hands of those who mould it. Gunpowder is as well known at Manchester, and as effectually used, as at Sheffield. Watchmen are wounded with slugs. A policeman is murdered. Horses are hamstrung, and, in one case, a favourite mare tied up had shavings placed under her, and burnt to death—the poor animal lingering under the agony for two hours. These are only a few of the deeds of the Manchester brickmakers. They might be multiplied, but it would be a useless waste of print and space.

Such, in our humble estimation, are trades-unions. Instead of being a benefit to the working-class, they are an injury, for they can only be carried on by means fatal to every right that a free people respects. They are destructive also to the legitimate ambition of industry and merit, and in their practical operation they are simply a

premium upon incapacity. These unions vary considerably in character, conduct, and spirit; but they all contain within them the germs and elements of injustice, if not of crime, inasmuch as they are founded upon the right of the *many* to coerce the *few*, and the employment of such means as may be deemed necessary to give effect to these dangerous and delusive principles.

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